

# JACK STRAW LIGHTHOUSE BUILDER

IRVING CRUMP







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LIGHTHOUSE BUILDER

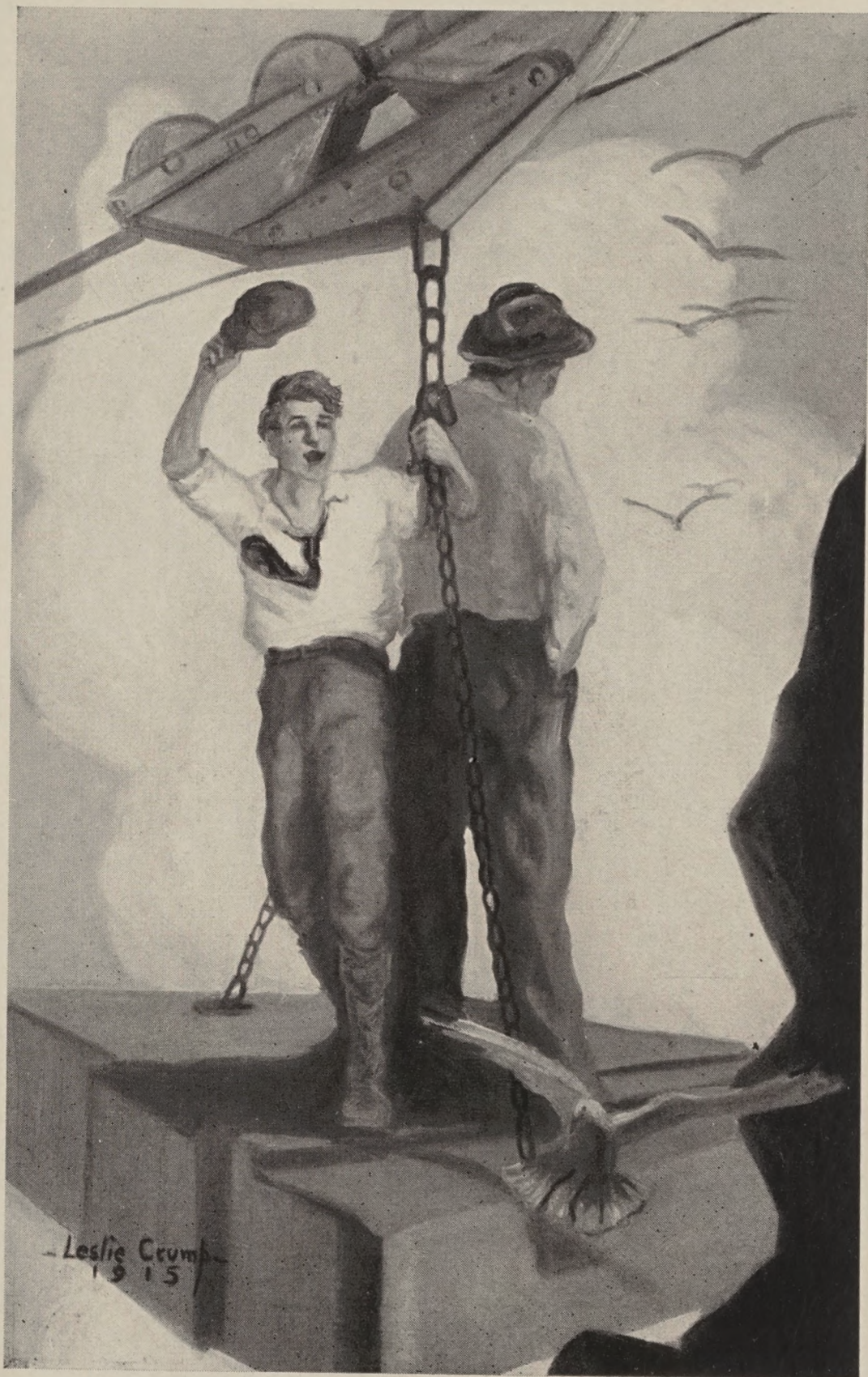












"Jack and Big O'Brien were the first to ride down to the lighthouse site on the aerial cable."



# JACK STRAW, LIGHTHOUSE BUILDER

By

IRVING CRUMP

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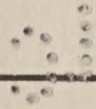
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To  
A Tom-Boy  
PEGGY







## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In presenting this account of Jack Straw's latest adventures it has been my good fortune to have the friendly advice of Dr. Raymond Haskell, Superintendent of the Third Light House District, and William H. Moon of the Lighthouse Service. I have also sought for assistance the pages of Commissioner George R. Putnam's "Beacons of the Sea," Talbot's "Light Ships and Lighthouses" and the "Lighthouse Service Bulletin."

J. I. C.

East Orange,  
September, 1915.







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JACK STRAW,  
LIGHTHOUSE BUILDER







# JACK STRAW, LIGHTHOUSE BUILDER

## CHAPTER I

### JACK RECEIVES A TELEGRAM

JACK STRAW was walking slowly down the maple-lined avenue that led from the campus to Phillip's Hall, the largest of the two dormitory buildings connected with Drueryville Academy, and judging from his many near collisions with the aforesaid maples, not to mention hitching posts, stepping blocks and pedestrians, it was evident that he was not looking where he was going. Indeed his nose was buried in the latest and final edition of *The Blue and White*, the school's weekly, and he was devouring the contents of the page headed "Track and Field" eagerly. The various individual and team records for the year were set



forth there in black-face type, and Jack, having been captain of the football team the previous Fall and no mean performer on the school's track team during the Spring, was rather keen to learn just how many times his name was mentioned on that particular page.

But before he had consumed a quarter of the reading matter, a *real* collision resulted. He was just about to turn the northwest corner of Phillip's Hall when there was a scurry of feet, and before he could look up some one hurrying at top speed swept around the corner. Instantly the air was full of arms and legs, the copy of *The Blue and White* accompanied by several school books, went speeding down the graveled path and a moment later Jack found himself seated on the ground and feeling for the exact spot on the back of his head where the west wall of the dormitory building had hit him. Six feet away sat tiny Tommy Todd, also feeling for injured places and trying at the same time to regain his breath.

"Jiminy—puff—puff—crickets, what'er you gettin' into a fellow's—puff—puff—way like that for, Jack?" demanded Tommy.



"Well, how on earth— Say, why don't you blow your horn when you are making a corner at top speed? I didn't know you were coming," returned Jack, scrutinizing the brick wall for dents. "Jiminy, I think if I had hit just a little harder, Phillip's Hall would be minus a few bricks."

"Huh, that's nothing to the amount of gravel I'll be carrying round with me for the rest of my life. Bet there is a peck of it jammed into my head," returned Tommy, rubbing his head solicitously.

"Well, why the hurry, anyway, Tommy?" asked Jack, as they stood up and began to brush themselves off.

"Why, I was looking for you, Jack—I—"

"Found me quicker than you expected, didn't you?"

"Yes and no; that is, when I discovered you weren't in your room I decided you might bob up most any place—and you did—"

"Well, what's wanted of me in such a hurry?" demanded Jack.

"What is wanted? Oh, nothing, only there are about a half dozen fellows over in your room waiting for you. Did you forget that



there was a special meeting of the 'D' Club called for this afternoon? The meeting is in your room at three o'clock, you know."

"No, I hadn't forgotten only—say, it isn't three o'clock yet, is it?" asked Jack, somewhat surprised.

"Oh, isn't it?" demanded Tommy, as he exhibited his watch.

"Jingo-netties, it's half-past three. I was so interested in *The Blue and White* that I forgot to hurry. Come on back, Tommy, and we'll have the meeting started immediately," said Jack, and seizing the diminutive catcher of the baseball team by the arm, he hurried him at top speed back toward the broad entrance of Phillip's Hall.

Seven members of the "D" Club, the organization composed of honor boys at Drueryville Academy, were occupying Jack's room when he pushed open the door.

"Well, good evenin', sir; did you call to tea?" demanded Harvey Maston sarcastically as Jack entered.

"Why didn't you keep us waiting until midnight?" called Cory, as he put down the book he had been reading.



"What's the matter—fall asleep in the physics lab?" demanded Buck Miles.

"No, fellows, I plum forgot what time it—Hi, quit."

"O-o-o-o-o-h, forgot," roared every boy, and a moment later Jack was busy ducking sofa pillows that were being hurled in his direction.

"Well, now that you have subsided," said Jack when the lads were out of ammunition, "the meeting will come to order." He rapped on the top of the center table with his knuckles for lack of a gavel and assumed an air of dignity befitting the president of the school's most important society.

"As I understand it," he said, "this is to be a special meeting for a general summing up of the athletic situation at Drueryville next year. Am I right?"

"Right-o," said Tommy Todd.

"Well, gentlemen, we will proceed. First, the baseball situation claims our attention. Tommy, how are things going to shape up next year with your outfit?"

"The outlook never was better," said Tommy, cheerily. "Out of the nine regulars on this year's team, only two will be graduated



and they are both outfielders. I've men in the substitute squad that will take their places all right."

"Fine," said Jack. "How about the track team, Harvey?"

"Well, I'm not complaining," said the captain of the cinder athletes. "The outlook could be better. Graduation isn't going to knock a hole into my list of runners, but I do wish that the freshmen who come in next Fall would include a couple of good sprinters. We need a good point winner for the dashes. Also we need a shot putter. Hanson goes out this year, as you know. He's been our only hope in the weight events for two years now. Wish I could find another 170-pound sixteen-year-old like him."

"Huh, if he knocks a hole into your prospects, think how he cripples me up," said Jack, who had been reelected to captain the football team next year. "He's been the only full-back Drueryville has had in years. I don't know where I'm going to get a man like him. There isn't a fellow in the scrub squad that can play in the full-back position and not stumble over his own feet. The freshmen will surely have



to show up mighty well in big boys to make me feel happy next year."

"Jiminy, that does put a kink into your eleven, doesn't it?" exclaimed Tommy Todd.

"'A kink?' Why, man, it ties a regular knot into our chances for the championship trophy, let me tell you. We'll never be able to make it three in a row with Seaton without another Hanson in the line-up," insisted Jack.

"Aw, cheer up. Don't be so down in the mouth about it. Perhaps we can find one for you this Summer. I'll look for one among the stone cutters down Bethel way, when I take my job in the granite quarries this vacation," said Cory, who was eager to have the meeting over with so that he could resume the book he had been reading.

"Huh, you needn't bother," said Jack; "the full-back you'd pick out would come onto the field with a fiction book under his arm. Well, Dink, how's the hockey team going to shape up?"

"Oh, we'll be there with an AI team next year. Every man in the line-up. Pretty good, eh?"

"Well, I'm in the same shape. The basket-



ball team will be composed of four of this year's regulars and Wefers, who played substitute forward all this year. I'm not worrying," said Cory gruffly, without even looking up from his book.

"That leaves me the only captain in want of a good man, doesn't it?" said Jack. "Well, you fellows take Cory's suggestion and keep your eyes open during the Summer for a likely full-back for me, will you?"

"You bet we will. I'm going to spend my Summer working in a hotel over in the Green Mountains. I may run into a good man there, you can't tell," said Chris Gibson.

"That reminds me, Tommy," said Harvey Maston. "Did you accept that job with the contractor? You said you were going to work all Summer on the new hydro-electric plant over in New York State."

"Yes, I go over there the first of July for two months. What are you going to do, Harvey?"

"Going to work for my father in his paper mill. There's room for another fellow over there. How about you, Jack? Got a Summer job yet?"



"No," confessed Jack, "I haven't. I thought perhaps I might help out father in his marble quarries. But I guess he won't be ready to open 'em up for three or four months."

"Well, why not come over to Bordentown and work in the paper mills? We could have a corking time together and you would learn a lot about paper manufacturing. Of course if you can get a chance to go to Mexico again, or something as interesting as that, I wouldn't advise you to accept my offer. A paper mill isn't as lively as a power plant besieged by rebels, but then a job is a job, you know."

"Well, perhaps I might accept your offer, Harvey. I'll think it over. You see, I—"

"Mis-ter John-n-n Monroe-e-e Strawbridge! Strawbridge!" shouted some one down in the street.

Jack's head bobbed out of the open window immediately.

"Here. Right here," he called.

"Tele-gum fer Mis-ter Straw-bridge," came the sing-song answer.

"Telegram!" exclaimed Jack. Then he shouted, "All right, bring it up! Third floor, Room Thirty-two."



"Huh, what's this? Some more mystery?" demanded Tommy Todd as Jack left the window.

"You know as much about it as I do," said Jack, somewhat disturbed.

A moment later the lazy tread of the messenger boy could be heard on the creaking stairs. Then came a knock.

"Come in," shouted Jack and the door was pushed open to admit a blue clad messenger of diminutive proportions, whose hat was cocked at a rakish angle on his head.

"Day letter. Sign on dis line here," he said laconically, as he handed Jack the stub of a much-used pencil.

Jack signed hastily and the youth scuffled out into the hall, forgetting entirely to close the door. But the captain of the football team did not notice this. With trembling fingers he was tearing the end off the yellow envelope, while the rest of the boys looked on in wonder.

As Jack unfolded the telegraph blank his face took on an expression of great concern. But as he began to read, this expression



changed to a smile of delight. Finally after he had finished, he exclaimed,

“Hi, fellows, listen to this. Talk about luck. Guess I won’t accept your offer for a job in the paper mill, Harvey. I have one that is almost as good as a trip to Mexico. Here, I’ll read all about it.”

Dear Jack:

On our way up from Mexico last Summer I told you of certain work that I expected to do for the Lighthouse Bureau. Part of that work is now to be undertaken. I am to build a lighthouse on Cobra Reef, Hood Island, Maine. I know that you are interested in engineering and therefore I am holding open a job as clerk in the building crew. If you want the position wire me at once and report at Jefferson Hotel, Portland, Maine, on Tuesday afternoon. This will make a Summer vacation position in which you can earn a little money and learn a great deal about marine engineering. If you haven’t anything better to do be sure and come along.

Yours truly,

JAMES WARNER,  
Lighthouse Bureau, Washington, D. C.

“If I haven’t anything better to do,” jeered Jack. “Huh, could there *be* anything better to do?”



"Talk about downright good luck," said Harvey Maston.

"When do you start? Next Tuesday. Eh! Three days from now."

"That's going to be quick work. I'll have to get Dr. Moorland to excuse me several days before school is officially closed for the Summer, but I haven't any more exams to keep me here. I guess I'll go over and see him now. I may leave first thing to-morrow morning if Dr. Moorland will let me off. I would like to spend a day or two with my dad and talk the matter over with him."

And taking his hat, Jack left Phillip's Hall for a hasty visit to the principal's cottage in the maple grove across the campus.



## CHAPTER II

“HOOD ISLAND—HO!”

OF course Dr. Moorland was willing to excuse Jack for the remaining week of school. Indeed, after he had looked up the lad's term record and examination marks in his little card index, which he always kept on the top of his study desk, the old pedagogue even urged Jack to telegraph his acceptance to Mr. Warner immediately. He pointed out that a Summer spent among the lighthouse builders would be of great educational value, and besides it would afford an excellent opportunity for the youth to earn some extra money. But first of all he suggested that Jack call his father on the long-distance telephone and secure permission to avail himself of the opportunity.

Jack's home was in Middlebury, about fifty miles from Drueryville, and the rates on telephone calls did not amount to a great deal.



He made the call on the principal's telephone while the old man listened to as much of the conversation as he could gather. Jack's father saw the offer in identically the same light as Dr. Moorland did and advised the boy to accept the position immediately. He did say that he hoped Jack would contrive to spend a day or two at Middlebury before he left for Portland, however.

When Jack repeated this to Dr. Moorland the principal generously excused him from any further work at Drueryville and suggested that he return to Phillip's Hall immediately and pack his things, so that he would be ready to leave on the first train Sunday morning, thus giving the lad at least two days at home. Needless to say Jack was thoroughly pleased with this offer and he wrung the old gentleman's hand cordially as he said good-by.

Ten o'clock next morning found our young friend swinging from the train as it rolled into Middlebury station. Townsend Strawbridge, his father, was there to greet him and drive him home in the new red automobile which he had acquired that Spring. Just at that particular period Strawbridge senior was a very



busy man. During the past Winter he had completed the organization of a stock company to operate the abandoned marble quarries on his property, and now he was engaged in the work preliminary to actual quarrying, which he assured Jack would begin some time in the Fall or the following Spring. However, he was not too busy to listen to all that Jack had to say, and you may be sure the lad from Drueryville Academy had a great deal to tell his dad. He reviewed everything, from the record of the baseball team to the bad outlook for the football team next year, and his father listened eagerly to every word.

Then after all the news was exhausted the two began to plan for Jack's stay with the lighthouse builders. Rough, serviceable clothes, warm sweaters, boots, oilskins and similar garments were dug up and packed in an old steamer chest which his father unearthed in the garret of the Strawbridge homestead. Salt water fishing tackle was put in shape, a compass, and sailor's clasp knife with a lanyard attached, were added, and the entire outfit was put in first-class shape for a two months' stay on the Maine Coast Island.



The preparations and the anticipation of the trip kept the lad keyed up to a high pitch of excitement. In this state he managed to accomplish a remarkable number of things during the two short days at home, and when it finally came time to leave on Tuesday morning both he and his father were of the opinion that everything was "shipshape" for a very pleasant Summer of work and play.

Jack lingered in the red automobile at the Middlebury station until the train on which he was to leave rolled in. Then a hasty good-by was said and the lad swung aboard the last Pullman car, to appear a few moments later on the observation platform in the rear. From this point of vantage he watched the man and the red car until a sharp bend in the road shut them from sight.

And as he stood there waving farewell, a strange feeling of homesickness came over this young adventurer and he realized fully how much his old dad meant to him. In truth a lump gathered in his throat, for it seemed to him that his father looked pathetically lonesome as he sat gazing after the disappearing train. Was he selfish to deprive his father of



his company during the Summer vacation? Was the trip going to be worth the sacrifice his parent was making for him?

"Good old dad," he murmured as he turned back into the car. "Good old dad. How lucky I am to have such a corking fine father. I'll bet there is many a chap who wishes that he was as fortunate as I am."

With such thoughts Jack rummaged in his valise and brought forth a fountain pen and some paper and for the next half hour he was extremely occupied in writing an affectionate letter to his paternal parent, which he mailed at the first stop the train made.

The ride to Portland, though it occupied a greater part of the day, was through very picturesque country. The Green Mountains of Vermont and later notches in the picturesque White Mountains were traversed, until finally the train entered the rich, thickly wooded country of western Maine. A few hours later Jack caught his first view of the coast, and he knew that he was entering upon the last stage of his long overland journey.

It was nearly sundown when he reached his destination, and he was tired and hungry and



his clothes were somewhat soiled from his day of travel when he jumped aboard the Portland trolley car on his way to the Jefferson House. He was not too tired, however, to make note of the fact that the city was unusually cozy in appearance, nor did he neglect to take a good look at the quaint, old-fashioned houses and particularly the one which the conductor pointed out to him as the home of America's greatest poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

James Warner, the same enthusiastic, sun-browned engineer whom Jack had met on board the *Yucatan* just a year before, greeted the lad from Drueryville Academy as he swung up the front steps of the Jefferson House. Mr. Warner was sitting in one of the long line of chairs in the hotel lobby when he caught a glimpse of Jack.

"Well, Jack Straw, how are you, anyway? I'm mighty glad you decided to come along," he shouted, as he gripped the hand of the young traveler.

"Huh, decided to come—why, there wasn't any alternative. I simply had to take advantage of such a piece of good luck. I think I'm the most fortunate boy in the world to get an



invitation to join your crew," responded Jack, just as enthusiastic as Mr. Warner.

"Tut, tut, my boy, don't be too sure of your luck. You'll have to work mighty hard. It won't be all play, let me tell you. I know, because I've been through it a dozen times," replied the engineer.

But Jack could not be convinced that a Summer on a Maine island with a lighthouse construction crew would not be about the most delightful two months he had ever spent in his life.

Mr. Warner changed the conversation completely the next instant.

"You haven't had dinner yet, have you, Jack? I haven't. I have been waiting for you and I've been getting hungrier by the minute. I spent most of my day down at the lighthouse depot, seeing to the loading of the *Blueflower* (that's the lighthouse tender that will take us to Hood Island to-morrow), and the sea air has put a real edge on my appetite. Come on into the dining-room and help me devour a good big steak. You can arrange for your room later."

Traveling had certainly not dulled the keen-



ness of Jack's appetite either, and he assured Mr. Warner, as they entered the long dining-room, that he would be able to do justice to the steak in question. And he clearly demonstrated this fact during the ensuing hour.

The evening was spent in Mr. Warner's room, for the engineer had a great deal to do in the way of packing clothes, books, and bundles of blueprints. At nine o'clock he called for a bell boy and instructed that worthy to bring two glasses of iced lemonade and a dish of assorted crackers, to fortify themselves, as Mr. Warner humorously explained, against a night attack of hunger.

Jack was thoroughly in accord with this strategic measure and fell to with a will. The luncheon disposed of, Mr. Warner suggested that they retire, since they would have to have breakfast at sunrise the following morning in order to report at the lighthouse depot at half-past six.

Considering the importance of the day, it is not at all surprising that Jack did not oversleep next morning. Indeed, he was up and dressed and ready to go down to the dining-room when Mr. Warner knocked on his door to arouse



him. Breakfast was disposed of in short order, and the engineer and his young companion were on their way down to the waterfront before the city was thoroughly awake.

But the men at the district lighthouse depot were wide awake and working with a vigor when they arrived. They were loading tools and supplies on board the *Blueflower*, and from the pile of barrels and boxes on the long dock at which the tender was moored it was evident that it would be some little time before the engineer of the Hood Island expedition would be ready to start.

The depot was an extremely interesting place to Jack. It was a reservation on the edge of Portland Harbor, surrounded by a high brick wall. Part of this space was taken up by long low buildings occupied as repair shops, and the remainder was devoted to storeyard space. Long docks reached out from the shore front and at these a varied assortment of craft were moored, ranging from tiny motor boats to the businesslike looking *Blueflower*. There was a frowning gray torpedo boat destroyer that had put in there for some official reason or other, and two weather-beaten lightships that were



undergoing repairs, not to mention a coal barge and several other unimportant vessels. On the docks and in the storeyard were huge iron buoys that looked quite enormous out of water. These were being painted and repaired, and Mr. Warner explained that they would soon be loaded aboard a tender and taken out to the various bars and reefs in the harbor to be planted as permanent channel marks.

The lightships were curious looking vessels. They were built of steel and painted red, with their name marked in tall white letters the entire length of the hull.

Each was equipped with two steel masts at the top of which were the lanterns and the big wickerwork day marks. The mast of one of the boats had been taken out, and Mr. Warner explained that she would later be equipped with a new kind of mast like a miniature lighthouse, which would be built of steel and large enough to permit a man to climb up through its center and not expose himself to the fury of the elements.

"Service on board the lightships, Jack," said Mr. Warner as they walked through the yard,



“is not as dreary as it might seem. These vessels are usually anchored out in the steamship lanes and passing vessels steer dead on for their light in order to keep into the deep channel. Imagine how comfortable it must be on a foggy night to be aboard one of these vessels and know that every steamer coming that way is headed straight for you. Oh, yes, they are run down quite frequently, for you see that they are without motive power in most cases and cannot get away from danger. Then, too, they are not allowed to slip their cable or leave their anchorage under any circumstances, no matter what the danger may be.

“There have been several serious accidents since the United States established a lightship service back in 1820, by putting a light vessel at the entrance of Chesapeake Bay.”

“How many light vessels are there in the Government Service?” queried Jack.

“There are now about fifty on duty, not including the relief ships, some of which sail under their own power and travel from place to place, relieving vessels that are brought into the stations to be repaired and overhauled,” replied Mr. Warner.



By this time the two had made a complete circuit of the yard and reached the dock at which the *Blueflower* was moored. A tall, good-looking man in uniform and smoking a pipe was coming down the gang-plank. Mr. Warner hurried ahead when he caught sight of him and greeted him heartily.

"Jack," he said, "this is Captain Wilmoth, who will take us to Hood Island, and, Captain, this is John Strawbridge, otherwise known as Jack Straw. He is a young adventurer whom I met on the way to Mexico last Summer. He is going to Hood Island with me as clerk. Incidentally he hopes to learn something about the service and a great deal about lighthouse construction work, for he intends one day to be an engineer."

"Well, you couldn't have found a more competent instructor, Jack," said the captain, as he shook the lad's hand. Then turning to Mr. Warner, he announced that the cargo had been loaded and everything was ready for a start. Mr. Warner made a last and hasty inspection of everything about the dock, saw that all personal luggage had been carried aboard, and then all three climbed the steep gang-plank. A



few moments later the men on the dock cast off, and with whistle shrieking the *Blueflower* backed out of her berth and turned her sharp prow toward the open sea.

The boy was left to his own devices for the next few hours, for Mr. Warner had a mass of plans and blueprints to look over. He did not become lonesome, however, for he seized this opportunity to inspect the tender. From stem to stern he rambled, taking in every detail of the vessel. He found that she was a roomy and rather speedy craft built like an ocean-going tug, only on a much larger scale. She was rigged to withstand all sorts of weather and accomplish all kinds of work, and her rugged lines appealed to the lad immediately.

While he was on his tour of inspection he ran across Captain Wilmoth, coming out of the cabin. He was a very affable-looking man of middle age, with sharp blue eyes and stiff black hair liberally sprinkled with gray. In his natty blue uniform, he was Jack's idea of a modern sea captain, and as he advanced across the deck the lad could not help admiring him.

“Well, son,” said the officer genially, “hav-



ing a good look at the old tub? Like her?"

"You bet I do. She looks as if she might fight any kind of a storm."

"Right, my boy, she can," said the captain as he filled his pipe from a leather tobacco pouch.

"The old *Blueflower* will take any kind of a sea without a shiver. All the lighthouse tenders are fine craft. They have to be mighty stanch for they are traveling the high seas all the year round, carrying provisions to lightships and lighthouses, and seeing that everything is kept in order along Uncle Sam's forty odd thousand miles of coast line."

"How many tenders does the Government have in service?" queried Jack.

"I think there are about forty-six on both coasts. And you may be interested to know that they are all named after some kind of a flower, the same as battleships are named after States. There is plenty of work for them to do, too, for besides carrying the supplies, they take care of all the buoy planting. That's tough work. In the Spring and Fall we have to gather up all the old buoys that have been in the water a long time and replace them with new ones that have been overhauled in



the Portland yard. You see barnacles and other submarine growths make it necessary to take the buoys out every so often and scrape and paint them. Then of course they have to be returned to the water again. There are all kinds of buoys in the service and they all mark different types of danger points. There are whistling buoys, bell buoys, light buoys, unlighted buoys and spar buoys, and none of them is particularly easy to handle, I can assure you. Many a man has lost a leg or an arm while trying to put one of the blooming things over the side of a vessel.”

“I’d like to watch the operation some time,” said Jack.

“Well, perhaps you’ll have an opportunity to. But just now I’d forget about it and pay more attention to the cook’s bell. He’s been ding-a-linging all over the ship. Don’t you want something to eat?”

“Eat, why I’m starved,” said the lad. And together he and the captain went into the dining-room.

The marine engineer had finished his work on the plans during the few hours before dinner and was at liberty to spend the time on



deck with Jack and the captain during the afternoon. The run to Hood Island took about eight hours in all, and the captain had estimated that they would not make their destination much before four o'clock.

The vessel was well out to sea and running due north when Jack came on deck and the boy thrilled with pleasure when he viewed the vast expanse of lonesome water. Astern was a long trail of black smoke across the sky left by a steamer that had disappeared below the horizon, while north and off the port bow was a distant sail almost directly in the path of the tender. Jack watched this sail curiously, for he was interested to know how soon the *Blue-flower* would overtake it. Gradually they drew up on it until he could make out the rig without difficulty. She appeared to be a very swift sailing yawl and Mr. Warner confirmed this when a few minutes later he brought his binoculars from the cabin and had a good look at her.

"She's a trim little yawl and from the pulpit-like affair on her bowsprit I take it she's a swordfisherman. These waters are full of



'em. I wish that they would locate a big fish, then you'd see some fun."

"From her lines," he said after another inspection, "I should say she was a mighty speedy craft. She has a big patch in her main sail. And her name is—F-i-s-h—H—it looks like Fish Hawk, but I can't be positive. Hang it, I would like to— Say, fellows, get your glasses. They *are* after a swordfish! There's a man with a harpoon climbing out onto her bowsprit now! Hurry!"

Jack and the captain hustled into the cabin and a moment later returned armed with binoculars. Through his, Jack got an excellent view of the little vessel. She had altered her course so that she was running at a right angle to the direction taken by the tender and the huge patch in the mainsail was quite visible. He could see the harpoon wielder climbing out on her bowsprit, too, and he watched intently as he saw him poise, spear aloft, ready to strike.

For fully five minutes the man stood in this attitude. Then suddenly he lunged forward and hurled the shaft. Instantly there was a



mighty splash just under the yawl's bow and the next moment the craft shot forward with a rush.

The fight was on! This way and that the little ship zigzagged, jerked about like a nut shell by the powerful fish it was hitched to. It was a terrible struggle! Now and then the monster would come more than half out of the water in a frenzied effort to tear the harpoon loose! Jack could see its long tusk cut the waves and he shuddered when he thought of the damage the sword would do to a dory or any other small craft in its way. But these tremendous rushes soon began to tell on the captive and the struggle settled down to a steady pulling match, in which the fish towed the yawl at least three miles out of the tender's course. At this point Mr. Warner and the rest put down their glasses. Jack, however, watched longer than the rest for he was extremely interested.

But before he saw the finish, his attention was diverted by a shout from the bow:

"Hood Island—Ho!" came the cry of the lookout.

There was something in the call that thrilled



the lad and instantly he turned his glasses toward the north. In the dim distance he could make out a long wooded island, the seaward end of which was a high promontory. On this was perched the black and white tower of the old Hood Island light; the structure which was soon to be replaced by a more modern building, providing Mr. Warner and his men were able to conquer the breakers that swept the head of Cobra Reef.

"Well, Jack, there's the scene of our future triumphs," said Mr. Warner, clapping the boy on the shoulder.

"Fine; it certainly does look interesting from here," said the lad enthusiastically.

"In about an hour you'll have a chance to see the place at close range. Then perhaps you won't be so keen about it, my boy."

"Oh, I'm sure I will," insisted the lad from Drueryville, as he took another look at the island through his glasses.



## CHAPTER III

### THE RUNAWAY

IT was late afternoon when the *Blueflower* came abreast of the southern end of the long heavily wooded island which was to be Jack's home for several months and on which the lighthouse crew was to remain until its work was done. Jack scanned the place intently through his glasses as the tender plowed its way northward. The island was exactly like a hundred others on the Maine coast, with ugly granite boulders strewn its shores, against which the breakers dashed madly, sending plumes of spray high into the air. Jack judged that it was at least three miles long.

Ahead, and about a quarter of a mile offshore, he could see where the combers piled upon a jagged line of rocks. This line traveled due north, parallel with the island for about two miles, until it ended in a peculiarly shaped mass of rocks that reared above the



waves, and looked exactly like the hood and head of the famous India snake. This was Cobra Reef.

Midway in the line of rocks was an opening about one hundred yards across. When the *Blueflower* reached this point she slowed down until she hardly more than drifted along. Then began some strange maneuvering, for Captain Wilmoth intended to run through this channel and get the tender inside so that she could land her cargo on the only strip of flat beach in sight.

First the craft would go ahead a little, then a jangle of bells in the engine room would call for a quick reversal of the screw and she would back away from a hidden rock. For five minutes this kept up. Then suddenly the signal bells called for full speed ahead and the vessel shot through into the comparatively calm water beyond the line of rocks, and plunged away northward again until it was opposite the little beach. Then with a rattle of chains the anchors let go and the trip to Hood Island was ended.

The high promontory with its black and white lighthouse tower was less than a mile



away. In the cleared space around the tower Jack could see several new sheds under construction and a huge pile of granite blocks stacked in an orderly array not far distant. This, Mr. Warner informed him, was the construction camp which the lighthouse crew was to occupy. All during the past two weeks vessels had been stopping at Hood Island, depositing tools and machinery and huge blocks of granite which were to be used to build the new tower. The last of the crew of builders had arrived the day before and were already hard at work constructing their quarters.

These signs of activity stirred in Jack a desire to be ashore and up there on the heights where he could see all that was going on, but unfortunately there was work to be done aboard the vessel which Mr. Warner had to oversee, and since Jack was in a way his assistant, he had to remain with the engineer and do a share of the work.

The *Blueflower's* cargo consisted of surveying instruments and numerous small barrels and boxes of provisions, kegs of bolts, and various other necessities which had been left



behind by the other vessels that had visited Hood Island during the week. These supplies Captain Wilmoth was eager to have landed while the daylight hours lasted, for he did not care to keep the tender inside the reef overnight.

"There would be trouble if a storm came up while we were inside here. It would be too dark to see our way out and with a high tide the breakers would come clean over the reef, and before we knew it we would be fast on those granite boulders over there," explained the captain to Jack as they stood on the forward deck and watched the men load the supplies into the *Blueflower's* launch.

Again and again this little vessel made trips between the beach and the tender while Jack checked off the contents of each load on a long list that Mr. Warner had given him. The marine engineer went ashore on the first trip and talked with the foreman in charge of the camp, who had been summoned to the beach by the *Blueflower's* whistle, and after he had given instructions as to the care of the goods brought ashore he returned and superintended the unloading.



The cargo that the tender carried was far larger than Jack had thought it to be, and the launch was kept busy for nearly two hours plying between the beach and the mother vessel. The men in charge of the unloading worked very hard to get everything ashore before darkness set in, but in spite of their efforts the sun had gone down and twilight was fast coming on when the launch was finally hoisted upon its davits and the *Blueflower* was ready to maneuver toward the open sea again.

In the half light of evening this was no easy task, and Jack and Mr. Warner watched with interest the careful methods adopted by Captain Wilmoth. But even with all his caution the *Blueflower's* steel sides scraped against the hidden granite of Cobra Reef on two occasions and it was only by the quickest kind of action that the vessel was saved from having her hull ripped open.

"Say, but that was as tough a job as I ever want to undertake," said the captain as he came down from the pilot house after the *Blueflower* had come to anchor outside the reef. "Did you hear her scrape? That granite would have ripped off a couple of our plates



if we had gone ahead six inches further. I surely feel as if I had earned my supper to-night. And I'm going to get it right now. I trust you gentlemen are ready to eat."

"We are," was the unanimous reply, and Jack and Mr. Warner accompanied the chief officer down to the saloon, for, you see, it had been decided that they stay aboard the tender overnight and run ashore in the launch next morning.

Day had disappeared entirely and night had settled down by the time they finished supper and came on deck again. Stars were winking overhead and a great round yellow moon was just appearing above the eastern horizon. Over the island the white light from the tower on the promontory flashed periodically, and just below and to the left burned a great bonfire, marking the location of the construction camp. The *Blueflower* swayed softly at its anchorage, and from the direction of the shore came the deep-toned lullaby of the breakers, softened by distance to a soothing night song. It was a wonderfully calm and clear evening, and it made a lasting impression on Jack. It seemed to him as if the



world had not a trouble or a care on all its broad breast, and he too felt singularly contented.

At half-past ten the watch fire on shore had gone out completely, telling plainly that the construction camp was asleep. This suggested retiring to the three individuals on the deck of the tender, which suggestion they were not long in following, for they were all tired, and besides they intended to be astir early the following morning.

By three bells of the first dog watch all on board the *Blueflower* were awake, and by six o'clock Jack and Mr. Warner had breakfasted and were on deck. Then since all their effects had been moved ashore the night before, there remained nothing for Jack and the engineer to do but shake hands with Captain Wilmoth and their friends among the *Blueflower's* crew and start in the launch for Hood Island.

Though the little boat was a sturdy craft, the tide racing through the opening in the reef threw her off her course several times during the trip, and Jack gained a good idea of how treacherous the water of Hood Island was and he could also see, by glancing along the jagged



edge of rocks, how the eddies formed and swirled about the Cobra Head. Indeed, though there was practically no sea running, the currents and cross-currents of the tide created waves about the base of the big rock that assumed the proportions of breakers, and dashed spray high in the air as they crashed against the immovable granite.

Mr. Warner saw what Jack was looking at and remarked, "Cobra Head looks like a mighty ugly place, eh, lad? We are not going to have the easiest time in the world building a lighthouse out there. Just think of surveying the site for the tower! Why, in a storm a man wouldn't stand any more chance on the top of that rock than a straw. The currents are so nasty out there that the seals don't even attempt to land. They come inside the reef and climb on shore to sun themselves."

"Seals? Do they have 'em here?" queried Jack, forgetting for a moment about the dangers of Cobra Head.

"Yes, they have seals here. Not fur seals, however. They are hair seals and quite useless. You'll see any number of them later in the day. Just keep your eye out for a shiny



black head in the water or listen for them to bark."

A few moments later the launch grated on the coarse sand of the tiny beach and the voyage from Portland was finally ended. As the engineer and Jack stepped out of the boat a gang of men headed by a burly, good-natured Irishman, whom Jack learned later was Shamas, otherwise known as Big O'Brien, the foreman of the camp, came down toward the beach.

"Mornin', chief," he said to Mr. Warner. "T' camp'll be ready for ye be t' end o' t' forenoon. In t' meantime, these fellers are goin' t' move the rest o' t' dunnage up, which wuz left here last night count o' darkness. Git busy, byes."

"Fine work, O'Brien. Now come on back with us and introduce us to our new home," said the engineer.

"Home, is it?" said O'Brien with a grin. "Sure an' I'm a-thinkin' it's another name we'll all be callin' of it be t' time our wor-r-k is finished here."

"Tut—tut—don't be such a pessimist," said Jack's companion good-naturedly.



The rap-rap-rap of many hammers and the noise of falling lumber was Jack's first impression of the Hood Island camp. This was gained even while he was at the foot of the promontory.

When he finally arrived at the top he found the camp a veritable beehive for busyness. But before he could take in the details of the very interesting place, Mr. Warner called his attention to a prolonged whistle blast from the tender. The *Blueflower* was saying good-by; and of course both of its recent passengers must needs signal back a farewell.

Jack watched the vessel until it grew quite indistinct in the distance. Then he turned his attention to the construction camp again. One small building and one long one had been completed, and the men were working on two other structures of the larger type. Mr. Warner explained that the tiny building was to be the general office in which he would have his desk, drawing-tables and the like. The completed long building was to be the bunk-house for the workmen, while the other two were mess-hall and work-shed in the making.

"We will stay with Eli Whittaker, the light-



house keeper, for the present at least," said the engineer. "The Government allows the light keepers to take men employed in the service as boarders. How will you like sleeping in a lighthouse?"

"Great!" exclaimed Jack, but he reserved the details of that pleasure for future consideration while he made himself acquainted with the camp.

Over near the edge of the promontory was a great pile of trimmed granite blocks, a huge stack of cement bags covered over with tarpaulins, two donkey engines, a cement mixer, a steel tower, and myriads of tools, tool chests, etc. Jack contemplated all this with sparkling eyes.

"Jiminy, but this is going to be an interesting place in a day or two," exclaimed Jack. Then— "Say, Mr. Warner, why are those granite blocks all cut so peculiarly? They look like sections of a great big jig-saw puzzle."

"Why, that is a detail of lighthouse building that is very interesting," said Mr. Warner, "and I will tell you about it just as soon as I can. In the meantime you— Say, Jack,



there's our swordfisherman again. It's the same yawl. See the patch in her sail and there's her name—*Fish Hawk*."

Sure enough, there was the yawl Jack had watched so intently from the deck of the *Blue-flower*. The little vessel was running across the wind and had evidently just come out from behind the southern end of Hood Island. She was plowing along at fine speed about one hundred yards off the reef.

Jack paused to admire her trim lines and he felt that with a coat of white paint and a new set of sails she would be a creditable yacht. The way she covered the mile and a quarter from the southern end of the jagged rocks to the opening through which the tender had sailed, was nothing less than remarkable.

"Jiminy, but she's a swift sailing vessel," exclaimed Mr. Warner. "I wonder who—Look! Jack! Quick! Some one has jumped overboard! Look, he's swimming ashore! Look at him plow through the water! By George, what strokes! He's heading for the inlet! He'll be drowned! The currents there will suck him under! He'll get caught in the undertow! The idiot!"



Jack had seen it all. When the swordfisherman reached the inlet, there was a scramble on deck and an instant later the figure of a boy appeared on the gunwale. A moment he paused there, balanced for a dive. Then with a pretty spring he shot out and down and entered the water without a splash. The next instant his head appeared in view, and he struck out with a powerful overhand stroke straight for the inlet, while the yawl went racing on ahead.

A great shout went up from the crew of the fisherman when they saw the boy in the water, and several men bawled orders and shifted sails. Then, with loud creaking and squeaking of blocks and tackle, the vessel started to come about. But her headway was enough to carry her several hundred feet past the inlet and by the time she had turned completely and headed back toward the swimmer, the lad in the water was almost in the opening between the rocks.

The fishermen saw in a moment that they were baffled and being unfamiliar with the channel through the opening they dared not try to run through it with the yawl. Once again



the sailing vessel turned; this time to stand away from the reef and out of the suction of the dangerous eddies.

But the swimmer was undaunted. Indeed, he seemed to welcome the current as an assistant, for he redoubled his efforts, and with his strong strokes and the speed of the water he fairly shot along.

Could he stay afloat in that terrible mill-race? Was it possible to battle the undertow? How soon would he be sucked under or caught in a cross-current and hurled violently against the jagged rocks of the reef? Jack and Mr. Warner stood there thoroughly awed at the swimmer's daring, while O'Brien and several other men in the camp watched in open-mouthed amazement.

In the meantime, the yawl had come up into the wind and at a dead stop. Then an attempt was made to launch the big dory from the stern davits. It dropped to the water like a plummet and almost before it touched the surface three men leapt into it. But no sooner were they in than they started to scramble out again, for the little craft was sinking fast. Evidently the swimmer had removed the plug before he



attempted his escape, thus cutting off one possibility of being overtaken.

But in spite of the dangers of the current, the lad in the water progressed famously. In no time he had battled his way safely through the opening. Then swimming madly he sped on toward the rock lined shore! On he came! The water fairly boiled about him and each powerful stroke brought him nearer to the island.

"Bully!" shouted Mr. Warner excitedly, as he watched the boy's progress.

"Great! Oh, if he'll only keep it up a little longer. They are scurrying around looking for a dory plug on board the yawl. I hope he wins, though I don't know what he's running away from," cried Jack eagerly.

But the tremendous pace soon began to tell on the swimmer. His strokes grew less powerful and it was evident that he was getting arm weary. Once he stopped and looked back toward the yawl, and seeing no one in pursuit he turned on his side and swam with a still slower stroke.

The last few yards of the race were made with evident effort, for the swimmer was com-



pletely fagged. Indeed, when he finally pulled himself out of the water, he sank down behind a rock and rested for several minutes before attempting to climb between the boulders toward the beach.

On reaching the sand he paused as if undecided where to go. Then after a moment he selected the path that led up to the promontory, and slowly made his way toward the construction camp.

“Jiminy, but that was thrilling. Prettiest bit of swimming *I* ever saw!” exclaimed Mr. Warner when the suspense was over.

“Pretty!” cried Jack. “By jiminy, it was *wonderful*, and—say, but that fellow is no little boy either. Look at the size of him! Oh, but what a full-back he would make! Why, he’s bigger than Jim Hanson ever thought of being. Guess I’ll go and meet him,” and Jack started down the path to greet the dripping figure, who came stumbling toward him.



## CHAPTER IV

### BIG O'BRIEN GETS HIS BICEPS INTO ACTION

“**B**Y jiminy, old man, you certainly can swim,” exclaimed Jack as he reached the lad from the *Fish Hawk*. But the newcomer to Hood Island made no reply. Instead, he stood still and eyed Jack suspiciously.

“Oh, that’s all right. You needn’t mistrust me. Here’s my hand on it. My name is John Strawbridge—Jack Straw for short, you know,” said the lad from Drueryville, extending his hand toward the big fellow.

“Mine’s Raymond Carroll. Call me Ray; it sounds better.”

“Glad to meet you, Ray. What’s all the fuss about, anyway? What are you quitting the fisherman for? Had trouble with the master?”

“Trouble? Huh, I never am out of trouble. Yes, I’ve had a row with the captain. He’s



my uncle and I guess a day hasn't passed in the last ten years that we haven't had some sort of a run in. But I've left him for good this time. I'd swim clean from here to the mainland before I'd go back on board his old vessel. By hookey, I've done nothing but fight with him and his men ever since I started on this cruise. He said he'd knock the inventive bug out of me or crack my head trying. He's thrashed me with rope ends and even mauled me with a belaying pin now and then when I got my dander up. Look here."

Ray threw back his wet shirt and exhibited a deep, ragged wound across his shoulder.

"And you swam ashore with that!" cried Jack incredulously.

"Yep, but if it had been fifty feet further I guess I'd never have come out of the water alive. My arm feels as if it was paralyzed. I can't raise it now."

"Huh, I don't wonder. Come on up to camp and get it fixed up," said Jack solicitously. But just at this point Mr. Warner and Big O'Brien joined them. Ray's shirt was still open and both men saw the ugly cut.

"By George, lad, that's a bad slash you have



there. What have you been doing for it?" said the marine engineer as he bent closer to examine the laceration.

"Taking a salt water bath," said the lad with a plucky smile.

"Yes? Well, if you get it infected, you'll not smile about it. Come up to the lighthouse and we'll see if Eli Whittaker has anything in his government medicine chest that will help you. A good application of iodine is the thing to chase away the poison germs and heal it up. Come along, son."

And together they climbed the steep path to the camp. Here they were greeted by a group of workmen who were eager to hear Ray's story, but Mr. Warner refused to allow the boy to satisfy their curiosity until they had reached the lighthouse and done some doctoring.

Old Eli Whittaker, the keeper of Hood Island light for ten years past, was just getting downstairs from his bedroom on the top floor of the little dwelling attached to the lighthouse, when Mr. Warner and his party arrived. The old keeper had been able to get four hours' sleep since five o'clock that morning, when he



put the light out, and he figured that he had quite enough to last him until the following morning.

"'Lo, Mister Warner. T'men told me you was coming. I calc-late ye came ashore this morning," said Eli, shaking hands with the engineer.

"Yes, Captain Whittaker," said Mr. Warner. "We came up on the *Blueflower*. Say, Captain, how's the 'doctor'? We have a patient here. We wanted to see if you had anything in your medicine chest to take the pain out of a nasty flesh wound. Some iodine perhaps."

"Wall, I calc-late ye can have 'bout a pint o' it. Hope ye ain't goin' t' need moren that 'cause that all's left in t' bottle. My two Manx cats 'Port' and 'Sta'berd' got fightin' t' other night an' I used a heap o' iodine t' mend up their plegid hides," said the lighthouse keeper, a smile playing about the corners of his mouth.

"That will be quite enough," said Mr. Warner. "Where are your two famous tailless cats? I guess every man in the service knows about those cats."



"Oh, they're around somewheres, drat 'em," said Captain Eli. Then he added:

"All right, come in an' make yerselfs t'hum, gentlemen, while I consult t' 'doc.'"

They were ushered into the spick-and-span living apartment of the tiny four-room cottage adjoining the lighthouse tower, while Captain Whittaker bustled into the kitchen and returned with the portable medicine chest which the Service furnishes to all lighthouse keepers. This was the doctor referred to and Eli scrutinized the various bottles carefully before he brought out one labeled "Poison."

"Here's the consarn stuff. Now, let me see this here cut, young feller," he said. Then when he had looked at the wound he began bathing and bandaging with experienced fingers. Of course Ray winced with pain when the iodine was applied, but he realized that it was the best thing for him.

"There," said the light keeper after he had finished, "I guess ye'll pull through all right, providin' no complications sets in, es Old Doc Chipman sez when he hed stitched up Buck Longyear after t' red bull hed carried him clear 'cross t' pasture lot on t' p'int o' his horn. How



did you come to get beat up so? Been gettin' fresh to t' skipper?"

"Yes, tell us your troubles, Ray," said Jack, who was dreadfully curious to hear the boy's tale.

"Oh, it isn't much of a story," said Ray. "Just a case of my usual luck. I've been living with my Uncle Vance for the last ten years. My dad died when I was five and mother followed him a year after. I guess Uncle Vance wasn't keen on having me on his hands from the first, leastwise he never showed that he liked the idea at all, so I always took it for granted that I was sort of in his way.

"He's a man who believes that every one including himself should work from dawn until darkness. He says it's the only way to get along. Just slave like a horse at the work in front of you. That is all he has ever done. He don't believe in progress and he won't take any stock in a single new idea. That's why he and I had most of our misunderstandings. I like to potter with machinery and build things. He called it all 'durned nonsense' and allowed he'd thrash it all out of me if it was the only thing he ever accomplished.



“Everything I built he broke up for kindling wood or tossed overboard as useless. Then he’d give me a flogging for not being hard at work on something more useful. It made me mighty mad. One time I made a corking fine waterwheel in the trout stream back of our house in Ascog. I had the grindstone hitched to it, and every time I wanted to grind the ax or a knife or anything, all I had to do was to slip the belt on the pulley and away she went.

“But when Uncle Vance saw that he was furious. He smashed the waterwheel and flogged me good. Then he set to work and gathered every knife and hatchet he could find in Ascog and made me sharpen ’em on an old foot stone just to teach me that laziness never profited any one. I was only eight years old, but I never forgot that. Always since then I’ve taken particular pains to hide everything I made.

“All this Spring I was working on a model of a non-sinkable metal lifeboat. You see, I had an idea I might have it patented and perhaps make money enough out of it to go to high school. Uncle Vance says my schooling



days are over and that any more learning would make me lazier than I am. And I just simply want to go to high school so that some day I can go to college and study engineering. Well, about the lifeboat.

"When we started off after swordfish on this last cruise, I smuggled the model aboard the yawl, because I thought I'd get a chance to do some tinkering on it when Uncle Vance wasn't looking. That was the worst thing I could have done. Last Monday he caught me working on it and he was thundering mad. He just rushed at me and tore it out of my hands. Then he threw the thing overboard and got a rope end. And when he whaled me so I couldn't stand it any longer and pulled away from him, he threw a belaying pin at me and hit me on the shoulder. Oh, he's a fine uncle, you can bet. Can't blame me for being bitter, can you?"

"I'm afraid I can't," said Mr. Warner.

"That's sort of tough treatment," said Jack with sympathy.

"I guess it was. Well, I decided after that I would quit Uncle Vance. Last night I took the plugs out of all the dories after they had



been hoisted aboard and then made up my mind to skip to the first land we sighted. And here I am. I guess Uncle Vance will miss me a little at that. He'll miss flogging me with a rope end. And he'll miss me if Old Bart gets seasick, as he often does. Old Bart is the harpooner and next to him I was the best harpooner of the—"

Ray stopped talking abruptly and looked with horror toward the door. There stood a big, burly, black-whiskered individual, who fitted exactly Jack's idea of an old-time buccaneer. He was hatless and his shirt was open at the throat and his great brawny arms were bared to the elbow. In his hand he gripped two knotted rope ends. For a moment he paused there, glowering at Ray. Then with a roar he lunged forward as if he intended to tear the boy in two.

"Oh, it's Uncle Vance!" screamed Ray, leaping back in fear.

And as quickly as the lad jumped out of the path of the fisherman, into his path stepped Big O'Brien, the camp foreman. This rapid change of principals seemed to disconcert the intruder for a moment, for he stopped abruptly



and faced the big Irishman. Both were silent and tense. Not a word did they exchange, but as they stood there glaring at each other it was evident that each was ready to crush the other with a blow. The fisherman's face was as black as a thunder cloud.

"Let me at t' whelp," he hissed.

O'Brien swallowed hard. Then slowly raised his hand and pointed toward the door.

"Git OUT! Git, or I'll thrash ye! Ye don't know how t' take care o' a nephhy!" he roared.

The fisherman did not move. Instead his fist drew back for a blow. But the foreman was too quick for him. Throwing self-control to the wind, the Irishman reached out and seized the big man around the waist. Then with a superhuman effort he lifted him from the floor and hurled him back through the doorway, following after him like a panther.

Now it happened that just at this point one of the fisherman's followers, who had come ashore with him, was entering the cottage. The captain, as he plunged headlong through the open, collided with this man and both fell into a heap at the very doorstep. But they were on their feet in an instant and O'Brien



had hardly stepped clear of the room before his bearded adversary was on guard.

O'Brien's eyes narrowed in anger. He never paused or wavered a moment but plunged forward like an enraged bull. It was a vicious fight while it lasted. Strength and brawn against strength and brawn. Two masters fighting in almost fatal earnestness, one to avenge an insult, the other to prove his mastery. The grunts that accompanied each trip hammer blow told the bitterness of the encounter.

There were no preliminaries. O'Brien rushed the bearded man and as he closed in his arm shot up from his hip like a shaft of darting lightning. Behind it was every ounce of strength in his great powerful body. The smack of flesh against flesh sounded and the fisherman staggered. An instant he swayed, then he lurched forward into a clinch before the Irishman could deliver a second blow. Desperately he clung on, swaying to the right and left with the foreman, who tried his hardest to shake him off.

Men came rushing from the camp. They formed a circle about the two. They were big



burly men and every one of them loved a fight. Jack and Ray and the engineer and even mild-tempered old Eli Whittaker were among them, and as they watched the swaying figures before them their natural love of combat cropped forth and they cheered lustily with the rest, cheered lustily at each clever move, no matter which one made it.

The fisherman held on to the clinch until O'Brien was almost beside himself with rage. He held on for his life until his head cleared from the stinging hammer-like blow he had received on the jaw. Then suddenly with a cat-like movement he broke, dropping low and slipping away from two terrific blows aimed at his head.

This agility called forth applause from the men in the circle, which developed into a burst of cheers when the black-bearded one stepped back again and drove right, left and right against O'Brien's stomach and jumped away before the Irishman could get in anything better than a glancing punch on the head in return. Once again he waded in. But this time he was not so fortunate. O'Brien's great ham-like fist smashed squarely against his nose, and



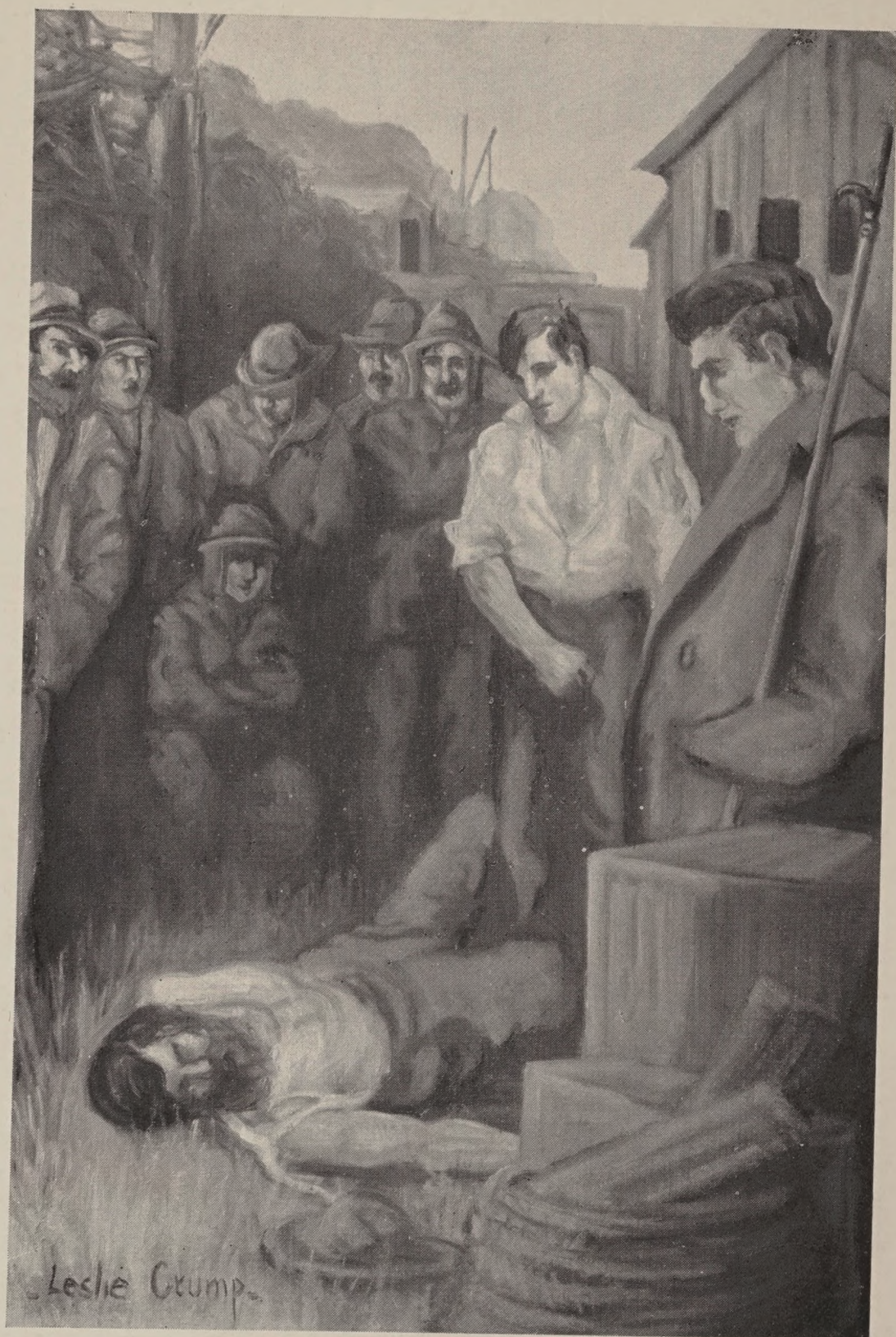
before he could recover himself a left hook shot up and snapped his head back between his shoulders!

Once more he clinched and held, while O'Brien squirmed and wriggled to free himself for a final and finishing blow.

But the fisherman's wits cleared again. Then for a moment his head rested on the shoulder of his opponent, his mouth temptingly near the great corded neck of the foreman. An instant later the mariner's mouth opened and his short tobacco-stained teeth sunk into O'Brien's flesh. He bit and bit deeply and tiny streams of blood trickled out from between his lips and stained the foreman's shirt.

With a howl of pain O'Brien hurled the man from him and rained crushing blows onto his face. The mariner was no match for the infuriated foreman after that. He dodged this way and that to avoid the terrible punishment, only in the end to plunge headlong into a mighty swing that O'Brien meant to be the finishing blow! The fight ended there! The impact was terrible! The bearded one's body snapped like a spring. He clutched blindly





"The fight ended there!"







for something to support him! Then he pitched forward into the grass!

A moment the great body quivered, then slowly his knees drew upward almost to his chin, and he lay perfectly still!

O'Brien stood over him, one fist clenched, the other mopping the blood from his neck.

"There, blame him, I guess that finishes his fightin' fer t'day," he said laconically. Then to the other swordfisherman who stood near by he said, "There's yer captain. Lug him out o' here es fast as ye kin. I don't want t' see his ugly face 'round here any more ner yours neither." And still mopping the blood from the wound in his neck, he elbowed his way through the crowd and disregarding the shouts of applause made his way into Eli Whittaker's cottage, where he sought the iodine bottle so recently used on Ray's shoulder.

For several minutes Ray's Uncle Vance lay unconscious on the grass while the other fisherman worked over him. Finally with the aid of a bucket of cold water, he was revived. Slowly his eyes opened and he looked about. Then without a word he struggled to his feet and assisted by his companion walked slowly



down the steep path toward the beach where his dory lay hauled up above the water line. The crowd on the promontory watched him go; in fact, they remained until they saw the small boat reach the yawl. Then O'Brien appeared on the scene again and sent them all back to their task of building houses.

"Say, your uncle is some fighter, Ray. But he wasn't a match for O'Brien," said Jack, as the two boys watched the fishermen raise the mainsail of the yawl.

"You bet he wasn't. That was some of his own medicine applied in a larger quantity. By hookey, I'll bet a copper he's raving mad at me. Mark my word, this isn't the last we hear from him," said Ray.

"Well, it's the last we'll hear from him to-day, for his boat is starting off toward the south," said Jack.

"That being the case," said Mr. Warner, "I'm going to look around and become familiar with my working staff. I want to start a survey of Cobra Head to-morrow if I can. You boys can come along if you want to. In fact, I rather think I'll need you along to help me take stock of materials and things.



"And, by the way there, son—ah—er—Ray, I mean, what are we going to do with you?"

"I don't know, sir," said Ray, looking anxiously at the engineer.

"Well, ah—er—hum, how'd you like a job clerking here with Jack? Can't pay you much, but we'll give you your board at least. There will be enough work for the two of you to do, I guess. How about it?"

"That would be slick," exclaimed Ray, all smiles now.

"All right. You're hired. Come along with me," said Mr. Warner.



## CHAPTER V

### MEN OF HONOR

AS soon as the trio began their tour of inspection of the construction camp Jack's curiosity about the big blocks of granite that looked like sections of a jig-saw puzzle was revived, and the first question he asked of Mr. Warner was:

"What were you going to tell me about that granite?"

"Oh, yes," said the engineer; "I haven't said much about lighthouse building yet, have I? Well, we'll begin at the proper place, which is the beginning, and I'll outline to you and Ray just what we hope to do here on Cobra Reef. I don't know whether you two have studied that big boulder out there that looks like a snake's head, but if you have you've noticed that it is about fifty feet across in either direction and that at low tide it stands eighteen or twenty feet out of water. Under those cir-



cumstances it is not going to be as difficult to build a lighthouse there as it would were the rock submerged all day. As a matter of fact, it is never totally under water, although sometimes the seas break completely over it at high tide.

“Last year when it was decided to supersede the Hood Island light with a more modern structure (you’ve noticed that the present tower is quite antiquated in appearance) engineers from the Bureau of Lighthouses came here and after a great deal of trouble landed on Cobra Head and ran a survey across the rock. Their figures were taken to Washington and studied, and the kind of a lighthouse necessary to crown the reef was decided upon.

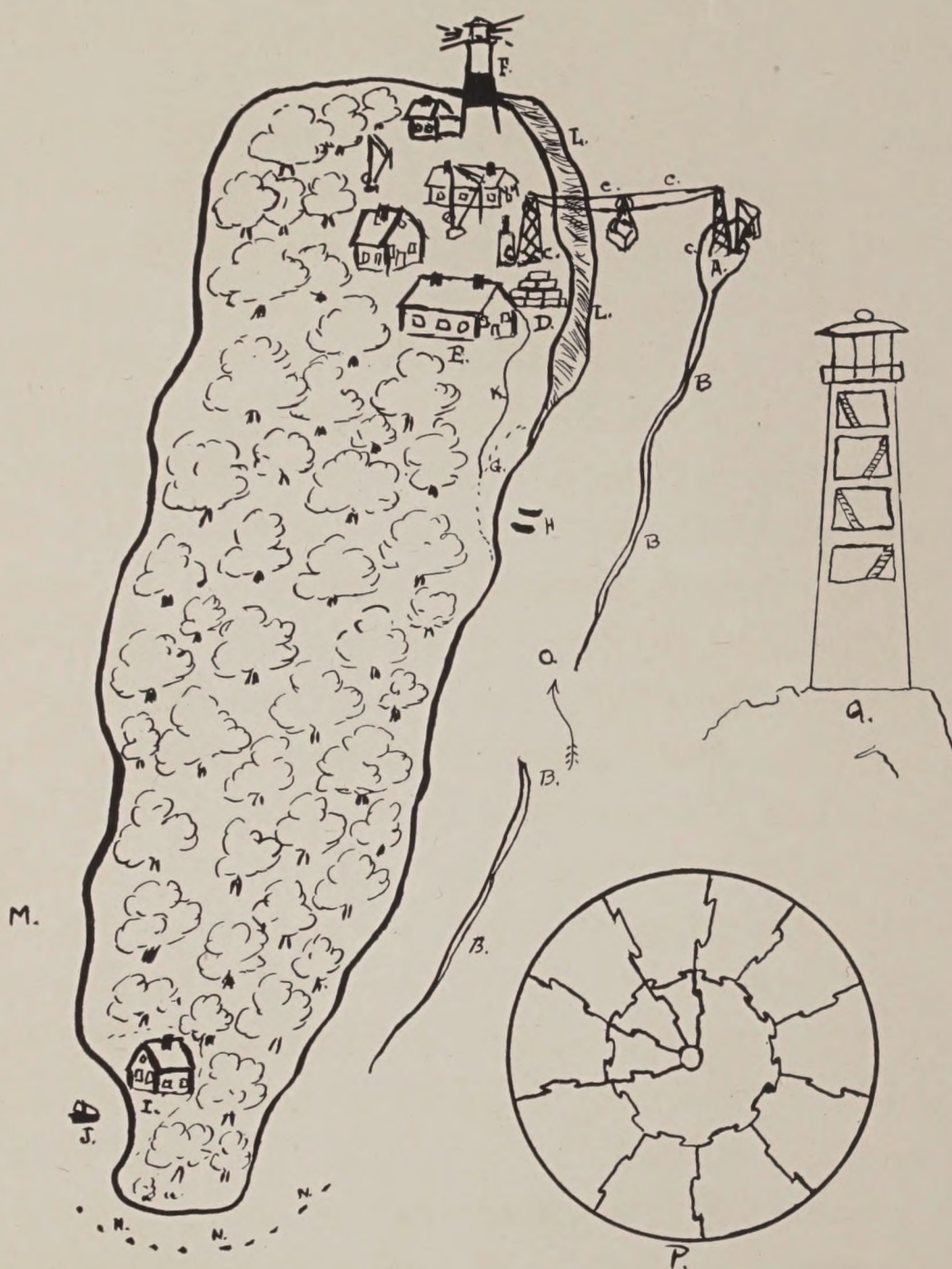
“The decision resulted in the adoption of the most common form of light which is known as a monolithic structure; a single shaft of stone. Lighthouses of this character are usually built of granite prepared as the granite you see over there on the cliff’s edge. There are other good lighthouse materials, however. Some structures are built of reenforced concrete, some of steel, and some are nothing more or less than wooden buildings built on steel supports.



“But granite is considered superior material where the light is wave swept, as this one will be. In building a lighthouse of granite it is very necessary that when the pile is completed it shall be almost as solid as a single section of rock. To make this possible a European engineer, a long time ago, devised the plan of making each block of stone lock into the other by means of dove-tailing them. This is accomplished by having the stonecutters in the quarry yards chip projections on the top and one side, and indentations on the bottom and remaining side of the granite building blocks, so that when the stone is put in place the two projections fit into two indentions on the side of the block next to it and the top of the one it rests upon, and the indentions on the side and top are ready to receive the projections of the next stone.”

Here Mr. Warner tore a sheet from his engineering note-book and sitting on the edge of one of the big blocks he sketched out a cross section of the foundation of the proposed lighthouse as well as a sectional view of the structure itself, thus giving the boys a clear idea of how the work would be done.





Map of Hood Island and Cobra Reef, Sketched by Mr. Warner and Later Filled in by Jack Straw and Forwarded to His Father.

A, Cobra Head. B, Reef. C, Cable-Way Between Island and Reef. D, Granite Blocks. E, Construction Camp. F, Captain Eli Whittaker's Light. G, Beach. H, Anchorage for Whale-Boats. I, Old Mitchell's House. J, Anchorage of the *Betsy Ann*. K, Path from Beach to Camp. L, Cliffs. M, Mitchell's Flounder Fishing Grounds. N, Mitchell's Lobster Traps. O, Opening in the Reef Through Which the *Blueflower* Entered. P, Cross-section of Lighthouse Foundation. Q, Cross-section of Lighthouse Tower.







"The work of shaping the stones is all done at the quarries; indeed the entire lighthouse is erected stone for stone in the quarry yard so that every piece fits perfectly. The blocks are then numbered and the structure is taken apart and shipped here. If you'll notice each of those granite blocks is numbered according to position and section. In that way there is no delay in preparing materials while construction work is under way."

"My, but that's interesting," said Jack. "I did notice that each block was marked, but I had no idea that building a stone lighthouse could be made as simple as all that."

"Oh, it may sound simple," said Mr. Warner, "but you just wait until we begin operations. Then it won't seem so easy."

"What gets me," said Ray, "is how you are going to get all of those big chunks of stone over to the rock. Why, some of 'em look as if they weighed five or six tons. Also, how on earth did you get them up on top of this cliff?"

"I'll answer both of those questions at once," said Mr. Warner. "You are quite right, Ray; the blocks do weigh a great deal. In fact, some of the larger ones to be used in the base of the



lighthouse weigh fully four tons. Under those circumstances it must look like a tremendous task to get them up to the top of the cliff and later take them over to the rock. You see, if Cobra Head had been larger and the water in the vicinity less treacherous, the lighters that brought the stone here from Portland would have landed it on the rock. Under the existing conditions, however, this could not be done and the next best thing was to land the material on Hood Island. To leave it at the beach, where we came ashore, would have been out of the question, for it would be necessary later on to reload it on lighters, section by section, and take it to the rock. Finally we decided that we would adopt the same methods as those used by the English engineers in building several famous lights; that is, we planned an aerial cableway between the top of the cliff and Cobra Head rock, thus providing a short and safe means of conveying men, supplies and materials to the reef's head. That steel tower yonder, which the men are re-rigging, and that donkey engine on the cliff's edge, were installed a month or so ago, and every time a lighter with stone and supplies of



a cumbersome nature came in, a temporary cableway was rigged from the tower to the mast on board the boat and the supplies brought ashore in that way.

“Our trip to the rock to-morrow will be to carry a line out there with which to rig up a temporary breeches-buoy outfit such as coast-guards use in case of a wreck. In this men will be sent to the reef to drill holes and make an anchorage for the aerial cableway which will be built immediately. Then everything will be ready for the real construction work.”

Mr. Warner paused again and sketched a map of the reef and the island showing how the cableway would be built between the island and the head of the reef.

“What sort of a foundation will you have for the light, Mr. Warner?” asked Ray.

“Oh, I was coming to that. Here’s how we will proceed with the work. To-morrow we will land on the rock, providing Neptune is willing. Then while some men are drilling holes in which to put the ringbolts to hold the reef end of the cableway, other men will start chipping away the humps and bumps on Cobra Head. That lump that looks like a head itself



will have to be cut away and the top of the hood will be made as flat as possible. It will not be necessary to dig very deep into the rock because the constant erosion of the sea for centuries past has eaten away all the soft parts of the rock, if there ever were any, and all that you see above water now is as firm and as hard as flint. As I said before, we'll pare it down somewhat in spots and we may be forced to use a little dynamite in the work, though I'll avoid that if possible for explosives may shatter the entire boulder if they are not used carefully. Then where would we be?"

"I think if that should happen you would have a mighty hard job on your hands," said Jack.

"You're right, we would," assured Mr. Warner. Then he continued, "When the chipping is all done and the cableway is in working order, things will proceed as smoothly as the elements will allow. The first blocks will be sent down and put in place. They will be imbedded in cement which will take hold of both the rock and the building block. After the cement is set a hole will be drilled through the granite block and deep into the boulder. A



heavy steel bolt will be sunk through this hole and anchored to the reef with hydraulic cement which will be forced home under pressure. When this cement has set the first tier of stones will be as solid as man can make it.

“When the cableway is working we’ll start to build a miniature construction camp out there on the rock. There will be derricks, for one thing, for no man, or group of men, could handle one of those tremendous blocks without some mechanical assistance. It is probable that half a dozen derricks will be built during the course of construction work, for storms will sweep them away in a jiffy once the waves get piling up on the Head. We’ll be lucky if we don’t lose some of our workmen too. There’s many a lighthouse along the coast the building of which has cost more than one human life. This sort of work, my boys, is not the easiest in the —”

“Ow-w-w-w-ye-e-e-o!      Ow-w-w-w-ye-e-e-o!”

“Good gracious, what’s that,” exclaimed Jack, jumping as if he had been shot.

Ray smiled and turned around slowly. “That’s a conch. Some one’s calling.”



"Yes, that's Eli Whittaker's dinner horn," said Mr. Warner, smiling at Jack's surprise.

"Call to dinner, is it?" said Jack, smiling too; "sounded to me as if a whole drove of elephants was charging down upon us. Well, if it means something to eat I'll welcome it as terrible as it sounds," said the lad from Vermont.

"So'll I," assured Ray, "though I don't know how I'm going to handle a knife and fork with my arm out of commission."

"Pooh, don't mind that as long as your mouth isn't in a sling," said Jack. "I'll cut up your food and you can use the fork with your good paw, can't you?"

"Just watch me," said Ray.

The sound of the conch was evidently the camp's signal for dinner too, for as Jack and Ray and Mr. Warner walked back toward the lighthouse they passed scores of men on their way to the long, half-finished mess-hall where Bongo, the dusky cook, was piling a board table full of good wholesome victuals. The men of the crew were of all nationalities, but they were men every one of them. Jack noted the fact that every eye was clear and



each moved with a stride that bespoke strength and agility. They were big chested and brawny and Jack did not know when or where he had ever seen finer specimens of manhood, a fact which he remarked to Ray and Mr. Warner.

Four seated about the tiny dining-room of Eli Whittaker's spick-and-span cottage made the place seem crowded indeed. Eli was his own cook and housekeeper and he was a past-master at both, according to Jack's way of thinking. That he was an excellent housekeeper was evident from a glance about the neat cottage and the neater light tower. And as for his cooking ability, well, great dishes full of steamed clams, three fat lobsters split in half, and generous portions of corned beef, boiled potatoes and canned corn, all provided eloquent testimony to this fact. The quartet fell to with a will, and Ray, despite his handicap, managed to consume as much as the rest.

After dinner the two lads helped Captain Eli wash dishes, though Ray was of little assistance because of his injured arm. And while they were thus occupied Mr. Warner came in from the camp with word that O'Brien



had assured him that all work on the buildings would be completed by evening, and that the next morning everything would be ready for their first attempt to land on Cobra Head.

A little later the engineer took Jack and Ray over to a two-roomed shanty in which he intended to make his office and drafting-room. Here they were shown to the rear apartment where there were several high desks and a number of books. This portion of the building, Mr. Warner informed them, was to be their domain, Jack being given one desk and Ray another.

For half an hour Mr. Warner explained in detail the clerical work that the boys would have to attend to, and before he left he assured them that their daily routine would not keep them occupied more than a few hours each morning and that the rest of the time they would be at liberty to spend with the engineers, or the crew, or do whatever else they saw fit to occupy their time.

Their first duties, however, were enough to keep the lads occupied for some time and Eli Whittaker's conch was sounding its evening warning almost before they realized it.



"Jiminy," said Jack, looking up from his books, "it's time to eat again. I'm hungrier than a bear too. My, what an appetite I've developed since I left Vermont."

"I get sort of hungry myself now that I don't have to worry about Uncle Vance and his disagreeable temper. If I only had the lifeboat model he tossed overboard I'd be as happy as any one could be. I'm going to get at a new model as soon as my arm gets better, by jiminy, and you can bet no one's going to get a chance to heave it overboard again. The thing that is worrying me though is whether I'll be able to remember just how I had the first one built," said Ray, slipping down from his high stool and joining Jack.

"Tut, tut," said Jack, "don't worry about it now. Let's go and get something to eat."

When the two lads came out of the office door they noticed immediately that although it still lacked an hour or more of dusk Eli Whitaker had already lighted the lamp in the tower. Jack and Ray watched it shoot forth its single ray of white light periodically as the big lens revolved.

"I'm going up in the tower after supper and



learn something about lighthouse lamps, that is if Captain Whittaker will let me," said Jack, as they walked up the path to the top of the promontory.

"I'd like to have a peek inside of the lamp too," said Ray. "Let's ask Captain Eli if he won't tell us something about the lighthouse service too."

"Good idea," said Jack as they entered the cottage.

The boys were not long in bringing up the subject of conversation, for almost as soon as the four of them were seated about the table once more Jack turned to the light keeper and spoke.

"Captain," said he, "Ray and I are mighty interested in the lighthouse service and we'd like to know a lot about it. Also we'd like to know something about the way the lighthouses are lighted too."

"Well, as fer t' way lights is lit I can take you up in the tower later and ye can have a look at my light and I calc' late I kin tell ye all ab'ut haow 'tis run. But that hain't ha'af what's t' be told about lights. Mr. Warner here knows more about lights than I do an' like



es not he kin reel off them there jawbrakers like 'equiangular prisms,' 'dioptics,' 'hyperradiants,' an' what-not 'thout even stoppin' t' think on 'em. As fer me I cain't never master 'em an' 'tain't no use o' my tryin'. Time an' agin I've clawed through big books on lights an' such like, but I allus finished 'm ignoranter than when I begun 'un."

"Pshaw," said Jack, "we don't want any of those big words either. What we want is plain English about how lights are regulated."

"Wall," said Captain Eli, "I calc'late Mr. Warner could give ye that a big sight better'n I could too, but es fer t' service; wall, I'll have a little t' say on that if ye want t' hear it."

"Go ahead, Captain; we're all ears," said Mr. Warner. "I'd like to get a good straight-from-the-shoulder opinion from one on the inside."

"Good," said the keeper as he began to pour another cup of tea for himself.

"T' begin with, I kin say that the Lighthouse Service is the finest an' best regulated department of the United States Government from my p'int o' view. An' it has the finest lot of healthy, big-minded, faithful men in it that kin



be scraped t'gether on t' face o' this earth. I guess it is because these men are in it that the service has been kept as sweet an' clean as 'tis. You hain't never heard o' no political scandals or what-not in this here department, have ye? No, siree, an' they hain't agoin' t' be none, not while fellers like they got in it stick.

"T' pay hain't big an' t' hours is long and tedious, but there hain't a man of us that 'ud shirk his duty in any respect. Just you look over my file of the *Lighthouse Service Bulletin* which is printed every month. There hain't an issue what goes by 'thout it has some mention o' some one doin' a brave act. Tain't much of a mention t' be sure, but we hain't hankering fer medals er praise. It's aour business t' pertect property on t' high seas an' save lives when we can.

"Why, there's some keepers as is so faithful they won't even take a day off. I read as haow a lighthouse keeper over on t' other coast in t' C'lumby River section has only taken two days off duty in twenty-three years. An' there was the old man who kept the Van Weis Point light down York way. Died when he was ninety-three years old an' he had been in t'



service fifty-two years. Peers t' me like a man jest natchelly gits faithful t' minute he's set t' watching out fer some one else's safety. There's wimmen in t' service too, an' they're jest t' same; all Grace Darlings when it comes t' a p'int o' nerve. Look at that air woman out Frisco way who stood all night on the platform outside t' light in a thick fog strikin' the bell with a tack hammer because the machinery had got out o' order. An' there was Ida Lewis, who lived at the Lime Rock Lighthouse near Newport fer fifty-seven years. She was keeper fer thirty-two years after her father died. 'Tis said she saved as many as thirteen people from drownin' during her life. Hain't that a record fer ye?"

"You bet it is," said Ray and Jack, carried away with the old man's enthusiasm.

"Wall, from that ye can gather what I think o' t' Lighthouse Service. No, siree, I hain't got many kicks agin it. There's on'y one er two things need regulatin'! There hain't no pension fer men who git too old fer the service an' fer men who are injured in the service, but we're all hopin' that'll be changed some day an' I guess 'twill. An' in the meantime every



one o' us is workin' our hardest t' keep t' service jest es clean es it can be."

The two lads were thoroughly impressed by the captain's recital, and although they did not express it each was of the opinion that if all the men in the Lighthouse Service were as sincere as he, the organization could not help but be free from any taint.

"By George," said Mr. Warner at the conclusion of the captain's remarks, "you surely are enthusiastic, but I think you have every reason to be so, for there isn't a finer lot of men in the world than the five thousand odd who have to do with lighting Uncle Sam's coast lines. And now, Captain, if you have a couple of amber goggles, which I believe the department is furnishing you men with who have charge of flashing lights, I'll take the boys aloft and tell them something about the lamp. That will give you time to clean up around before you get ready to go on watch."

Captain Eli filled his pipe first, then rummaging around in his bedroom produced two sets of goggles which he gave to the boys.

"My goggles are hanging on a peg in the



lower light room," he said to Mr. Warner.

The engineer led the way through the enclosed passage that connected the cottage with the light and presently the boys found themselves in the base of the tower from where a spiral staircase wound its way aloft.

"This is a mighty old light. I think it was built nearly a century ago before lighthouse construction was done as scientifically as it is to-day," said the engineer. "But, nevertheless, it must have been built well to withstand the elements so long. Although the promontory on which it stands is nearly one hundred feet high and the tower thirty feet tall, Captain Eli has sent in a report on several occasions of waves having broken panels in the lantern, so you can see the old place has stood through some storms."

The trio were climbing the circular stairs now and Jack noticed, as they wended their way round and round the building, that a long steel wire dangled down into the well of the stairway from the very top of the tower. On the end of the wire was a heavy weight. Of course the boys sought a reason for this, and



when they reached the lower light room where Mr. Warner found his goggles, Jack asked him about it.

"That weight," said the engineer as he adjusted the amber glasses, "operates the clock works in the lamp, which in turn drive the lenses round and round the lamp and produce the flash. Come aloft now and I'll explain it all in detail, only first put on your glasses because your eyes will not stand the strain of looking into the light."

The boys did as requested and a moment later they climbed up the last section of the spiral stairs and entered the light. This was a platform on the very top of the tower enclosed by eight panels of glass. There in the center, revolving slowly round and round an incandescent oil vapor lamp was the big lens. Mr. Warner began to explain immediately.

"To begin with, the first forms of light were, of course, wood and coal fires which were burned in braziers. These lights were used in England and in the Mediterranean for a long time. The next step was naturally the candle, but no matter how big they made their tallows, or how many of them they crowded into a



lantern, the result was a very weak light. Then came the oil lamps of all varieties. Some burned one kind of oil, some another; a few had one kind of a wick, a few had another type, and so on. Indeed, the experimenting with marine lights has extended over a long period and even to-day there is no universal form of lighting for lighthouses. But that, of course, is because conditions are not the same at each light. Acetylene gas is used for light buoys and similar purposes, and electricity is used where a supply is available, or where it can be manufactured conveniently; but the most satisfactory illuminant, all things considered, is kerosene oil. Indeed, the Lighthouse Service consumes more than half a million gallons of kerosene annually.

“For a long time lamps with from one to five concentric wicks were used in the majority of lighthouses, but these are gradually giving way to incandescent oil lamps, such as the one you see behind the lens there. It is a small compact affair and it gives a most brilliant light and at the same time consumes very little oil. The kerosene, which is supplied from a tank in the lower light room, is heated



and vaporized, the vapor mixing with air under an incandescent mantle and burning as steadily as an incandescent lamp in a city street, only brighter."

"That's very interesting," said Ray, who had been watching the lamp for some time. "Now tell us something about the lens, won't you? How did they come to invent such a complicated-looking affair?"

"Yes, I'll tell you about the lens. Old-time lighthouse engineers were always experimenting on how to improve the efficiency of a light and when they got through changing the forms of fuel they tried the use of reflectors of various types. Their efforts were more or less successful, but when a French physician by the name of Fresnel came forward with an elaborate system of lenses the science of coast lighting was revolutionized. This lens you see before you is the present-day result of his efforts. It embodies his idea worked out to perfection. You will notice that there is a central lens, or bull's-eye, and that around it are grouped prisms of highly polished glass. The idea is this: The light throws rays on every side, back, front, top, bottom, and all over.



Well, these prisms of glass grasp, as it were, each ray that shoots out at the side and top and literally bend it and shoot it forward. In that way all the light from the lamp is gathered into one bundle and sent out in a given direction, instead of radiating off on all sides. The lens works exactly like a megaphone which your football rooters use at Drueryville, Jack. Do you get the idea?"

"Indeed I do and it is mighty interesting," assured the young Vermonter.

"Good, and now if you've seen all you want up here we'll go down in the lower light room, for it is hot in the lantern here and besides even with these goggles the bright light hurts my eyes."

"Mine too," said Ray, leading the way through the tiny trap door and down the stairway to the lower light room.

"Why do they have some lights flashing and some just a steady glare?" asked Jack when they reached the next room.

"Well, lighthouses to-day can be made to serve a double purpose. They warn mariners of a dangerous coast and by means of flashes they tell vessels which particular light they are



near so the seamen know their exact position when they are traveling the coast. This light shows steadily for one minute and then gives a five-second flash. The next light down the coast may give two or three flashes a minute and so on."

"Do sea captains have to know the flashes of every light along the coast?" queried Jack?

"Indeed they do and a lot more too," said Mr. Warner.

"What is the candle-power of lighthouse lamps?" asked Ray.

"They vary a great deal," said Mr. Warner; "this is very small compared with some of our lights. The one on the Highlands, marking the approach to New York Harbor, is said to be of 25,000,000 candle-power. Not long ago we sent one to the Hawaiian Island that had a lens nearly nine feet tall and weighed four tons. It is mounded, or floated rather, on a bed of mercury and makes a complete revolution every twenty seconds, sending out a double flash of 240,000 candle-power. If it were not for the curve of the earth it could be seen more than forty miles."

"Jiminy, what a light!" exclaimed Jack.



"Did you hear that, Captain Eli?" The keeper was just coming up the spiral stairs to go on watch when Mr. Warner completed his statement.

"Yes, that sort o' makes my little pet up aloft there seem like a taller candle, don't it?"

"Well, Captain," said Mr. Warner, "how's the weather for a clear day to-morrow?"

"Right's a fiddle, sir," said the old man.

"And what time is high tide?"

"Tide turns at seven to-morrow—it'll be full at two o'clock," said the lightkeeper.

"Good, we've got to make a landing on the reef, you know, and we want clear weather for such a venture. I only hope we all come out of it alive," said Mr. Warner, showing great concern. Then turning to the boys he said: "Well, lads, if you are going to be up to tussle with the waves to-morrow, you'd do well to go to bed. You'll probably have to bunk together. Which room is theirs, Captain?"

"The little room in t' so'est corner," said the captain, adjusting his goggles preparatory to a visit to the light. Then before he climbed the stairs he paused a moment and spoke. "Say,



have either of you a watch that keeps good time? I dropped mine this mornin' an' now she won't tick any more. An' ye know I feel sort o' lonesome up aloft here when I hain't got a timepiece about me. Sometimes my watch's face is t' on'y friendly face I see fer months, 'ception that o' old Mitch, t' lobsterman who lives down t'other end o' t' island. He's the only one on this forsaken strip o' land except me."

"Here, Captain, take my watch," said Jack, hastily handing over the gold timepiece that his father had given him several years before.

"Thank 'e, when ye want it jest let me know. I calc-late I'll be able t' fix mine in a day er so."

Then as he started up the spiral stairs he said:

"Well, good night, boys. I'll be abed when ye start out fer t' rock to-morrow, so here's luck an' hopin' ye'll come back safe. Good night."

And Ray and Jack started downstairs, both wondering what the next day would bring forth.



## CHAPTER VI

### WINNING THE ROCK

**T**HUMP, thump, thump.

“Hi, Jack! Hello, Ray! Come, wake up. Think you can sleep all day? It’s half-past five.”

Thus were the two lads aroused next morning by Mr. Warner as he came from his room across the hall.

“Come,” he added, “tumble out. The boat will start for the rock before you are dressed.”

This was enough to stir both lads, for they had set their hearts on taking part in the tussle with the waves to gain the top of Cobra Head. They were on their feet in a jiffy and presently were whisking on their clothes with little regard for sartorial effect. Jack managed to get his undershirt on wrong side out, as boys frequently do when they are in a hurry, and Ray discovered that he was trying to get his left foot into his right shoe. But in a remark-



ably short time they had adjusted things, dashed cold water in their faces, given their hair a brief but effective brushing, and emerged from their room.

Ray's arm was a little stiff at first, but the iodine that had been applied the day before had taken most of the soreness out of the cut and he positively refused to keep his hand in a sling any longer.

"I'll keep on the bandage, but I won't wear a sling. Makes me feel like an invalid," he told Jack as they descended the stairs and joined Mr. Warner in front of the lighthouse cottage.

Captain Eli was of course snugly tucked in bed and snoring lustily at that unseemly hour, and since the engineer and his young companions were destined to be early risers during their stay on the island it had been decided that they take their breakfast with the crew in the main mess-hall.

Bongo, the big negro cook of the outfit, was just sounding his call to quarters on the bottom of a big dishpan when the three entered the long low building. There was little of a decorative nature about the arrangement of



the tables in the hall. There were two, that extended the full length of the room and were flanked on either side by long backless benches.

In twos and threes and groups of half a dozen the burly lighthouse builders came from the bunk-house to the mess-hall. They were a happy-go-lucky lot who could not resist a little horse play by way of a morning's greeting and the fisticuffs and good-natured chaffing that resulted made Bongo's face shine with merriment as he hustled about the room with big bowls of steaming victuals.

Jack, Ray and Mr. Warner crowded in beside the foreman, Big O'Brien, and fell to with as much zest as the rest of the men. The breakfast was of a rather coarse nature, to be sure, consisting chiefly of baked beans, liberal slices of salt pork, thick slices of bread, canned peaches and coffee as strong and black as Bongo could possibly brew it. But Jack ate with a decided relish, nor did he pause to compare the breakfast with those served at Drueryville.

During the entire meal Mr. Warner and Big O'Brien were in earnest conversation, to which Jack and Ray were very attentive. The



men were discussing the details of the expedition to the rock, and as the lads listened to the preparations that were being made they realized more and more that they were about to embark upon a hazardous undertaking.

By quarter of six the foreman and the engineer had drained their cups and pushed back their plates. Others of the crew were doing the same thing when O'Brien stood up and shouted, "Come, bhoys, ye have t' sha-ake a leg. In haf en hour-r we'll man t' bhoat and r-run out on t' last o' the down tide. That'll give us an hour-r t' fuss ar-round befer it sthar-rts a-racin' in agin. Come on, Mike, and you, Sandy, and Lafe there, git a wiggle on yez, yer all part of the boat crew." And presently there was the scuffle of many feet and the rasp of the benches being pushed back, and five minutes after O'Brien left the mess-hall Bongo had the place to himself.

Before collecting his crew the foreman singled out three sun-tanned workmen who were among the last to leave the mess-hall and with them at his heels the big Irishman went into one of the tool sheds. Shortly all four reappeared, one dragging a little brass cannon, such



as is used by coast guards, while the others carried a big open box, into which hundreds of feet of sail cord was coiled upon pegs.

The cannon was hauled to the cliff's edge, loaded and sighted by one of the weather-beaten trio, so as to hurl a rocket-like projectile over the ugly gray rock out there where the breakers curled.

Of course Jack and Ray could not entirely understand what it was all about, but, while they were wondering, Mr. Warner, who had gone to his office for his steel surveying tape and plumb line, arrived on the scene and explained that, when the men succeeded in landing on Cobra Head, the projectile would be fired so as to carry a rope to them. And when they had all things fast, a breeches-buoy would be rigged to carry more men from the cliff to the rock.

Upon Mr. Warner's return, O'Brien quickly gathered his crew and, with Jack and Ray among them, they started down the pathway that led to the beach where the two whale-boats were moored. Into these the men swarmed and a few minutes later the craft shot away from the strip of sand and headed north



inside the reef and toward the dangerous Cobra Head.

It was low water and the long jagged reef, exposed from end to end, looked exactly like a giant of the species after which it had been named. Outside, beyond the wicked rocks, rolled the Atlantic; great ground swells heaving in restlessly and thundering against the granite barrier with a grumbling roar. Jack and Ray, who sat in the stern of the whaleboat with Mr. Warner and Big O'Brien, were fascinated by the sight.

But, although the waves piled up outside, the strip of water between the island and the beach was unruffled, so far as the surface was concerned. Under this calm exterior, however, were currents and cross-currents that slipped oilily over the granite-strewn bottom in spite of the fact that it was the hour for slack water. Jack could see from the way Big O'Brien handled the tiller and the strength that the men put in their tugs at the oars that the force of these currents was tremendous, and he wondered what that strip of water would be like when the tide turned and began to come in.

As the whaleboat proceeded northward and



approached the big rock the currents became more vicious. They ripped and swirled and licked at the side of the sturdy vessel like the advance guard of Neptune's forces defending the rock from the invaders. The men were bending to the oars now and grunting with each stroke, and Jack and Ray could see the muscles in their knotted arms stand out under the strain. Slowly but surely the boat drew nearer the tremendous boulder, and as the lads got a closer view of the pedestal on which the new lighthouse was to be erected they realized why Mr. Warner had cause to worry about the outcome of the expedition.

For fifty feet about the great chunk of granite the water fairly boiled with eddies and currents and the force of the heaving swells of the Atlantic. Here all these met and struggled for supremacy, and the ugly sides of Cobra Head were lashed and pounded by tons of water hurled against them. It seemed folly for a craft even as stanch as the big whaleboat to venture into that turmoil and dare the approach of the rock.

And to make the situation harder the head presented a grim and foreboding surface to the



adventurers. Indeed, there did not appear to be a crack, or crevice into which the men could get a foothold when they attempted a landing, and if there really were any they were well covered with slippery brown rock weed and kelp that draped the sides of the massive stone. In truth, as Jack gazed upon the grim barrier, it looked to him like the great shaggy head of Medusa with her snaky locks tossed about in the hissing breakers. And the thunder of the tumbling water was almost deafening.

"Mighty ugly looking, isn't it?" shouted Mr. Warner, for a shout was necessary to make his voice heard above the roar.

"I should say so," cried the boys, trying to suppress their excitement.

Big O'Brien cupped one hand about his mouth and shouted to the boat crew:

"Row on, boys. Pull, an' we'll go ar-round t' blitherin' thing t' see if ther-re be a place fer a fly t' sthick on." And the men bent to once more and urged the craft forward, keeping outside of the ring of troubled water as much as possible.

Slowly they made their way round the circle, the whaleboat pitching and rolling like a cork.



Foot by foot they moved through the boiling, foam-flecked water and all the time Big OBrien and Mr. Warner scanned the great granite crag for a place to attempt a landing.

And at last they found it. To be sure it was not much of a landing place, but then it was better than a sheer wall of granite covered with slippery kelp. On the ocean side where the great breakers dashed in with a roar the rock weed had been all torn away by the force of the water. Ages of erosion had worn soft spots in the granite away, too, until there remained a slopping trough into which the water dashed with a hiss and fountained twenty feet in the air.

The constant action on the sloping side had worn the hard stone as smooth as glass and the dashing of the wave plumes had pitted the rock here and there above, so that a man of great agility could hope to gain the top if he moved fast enough and could beat these curling tongues of water that shot against the rock and licked it clean.

"Tiz there 'er no place, Chief," shouted the foreman to Mr. Warner. Then, as the engineer studied the situation, he shouted again.



"May we be per-rteched whin we tr-ry too; fer if wan o' thim waves hits yez a slap in t' back 'twill be Davy Jones' Locker t' next stop. They'll suck yez under in a whink, an' yez'll niver see daylight agin. No shwimmin' yez ivver learnt will save yez agin the undertow."

"Well, the engineer who made the survey last year did it, O'Brien, and I guess we can do as much," called Mr. Warner.

"Sure-re yez 'er a Kilkenny cat fer pluck," said the foreman, "but I'm wid yez. Hi, bhoys, we'll make a landin'. Tiz me an' Mr. Warner what does it an' don't anither wan o' yez even think o' thr-ryin'. Yez hear-r me now. I'll lick t' life out o' eny man who even sthands up in t' bhoat. Here, Lanky Sims, yez 'er t' bist sailor in t' outfit; take t' tiller and mind yez kape her hull. Jist a shlip an' she'll be smashed t' kindlin' agin t' r-rock an' we'll all be at t' bbottom."

Lanky Sims, a tall, raw-boned Yankee who had been brought up on the high seas, came from the bow and took O'Brien's place. Mr. Warner turned solemnly and shook hands with Jack and Ray, and O'Brien did the same. Not a word did they utter, but the lads understood,



and a lump as big as an apple came into Jack's throat.

The engineer and the foreman made their way to the bow of the boat. Then Lanky Sims took a fresh quid from a black plug of tobacco, spat over the side and shouted:

"Yo-heave-ho, boys!"

And the men bent to the oars with a will. Sims took the craft out toward the open ocean, then turned her, and with the swells at her stern started to ride in slowly, keeping his eyes pinned on the sloping trough of rock into which each big wave plunged and surged aloft with a gurgling hiss. Nearer and nearer they drew, the men rowing with short strokes and keeping their great bodies alert and ready to obey Sims' orders. Mr. Warner had decided to try first, in spite of the Irishman's protests, and he stood waiting in the bow, one foot on the gunwale and his hand resting on Big O'Brien's shoulder to steady himself.

Sims watched the waves with calculating eyes. Not a muscle in his face moved. Not a nerve in his body quivered. Closer and closer to certain destruction moved the pitching boat. A great wave raised it, held it trembling aloft



for a moment, then slipped out from under it and shot into the trough, spurting foam and water aloft and drenching the entire crew. And the moment its force had been spent and the water began to suck backward Sims gave the expected order.

“Yo-heave-ho!” he roared and bent his body forward. The oars dug deep and the whaleboat shot forward! Mr. Warner hesitated a moment, then jumped! Into the trough he dropped and up the slippery granite he scrambled. He reached the first niche, the second, the third. He was ten feet up, twelve, and now fifteen. Then Sims shouted:

“Back, boys, back water quick. Here comes another.”

The oak oars bent and creaked under the strain. The whaleboat shot backward and full into the oncoming wave. For a fraction of a second it stopped dead and every timber quivered. Then with a rush it shot backward again and the wave slipped under it and hurled itself into the trough, its great curling tongue licking up the side of the rock as if seeking to tear Mr. Warner from the little niches to which he clung.



But the engineer was safe. He was drenched with foam and spray, but he was well out of the way of the dangerous water. Up he climbed, slower now, feeling his way from place to place; while the boat backed off to a safe distance and the crew watched his progress. Finally he gained the top and stood erect. Then, what a shout went up from the men in the whaler!

It was O'Brien's turn now. The big Irishman stood up in the bow while Sims began maneuvering the boat once more. Again it approached the rock slowly, riding in on the long waves until it began to get dangerously near the big boulder. Then the tall Yankee at the tiller waited, tense and alert, watching his chance to run in immediately after a big wave had spent itself, and back the boat out of danger before the next wave could hurl it against the granite and shatter it into splinters.

The chance came. A big wave burst with a roar against the rock, the spray splashing in all directions. Then, as the tons of water slipped back again, Sim roared his "Yo-heave-ho" command.



In shot the boat against the curling, sucking eddies. Big O'Brien balanced a moment on the gunwale and leapt forward. Into the trough he dropped. Then began the scramble for the first niche before the next wave surged in and seized him. Up he climbed over the slippery stone. He reached the first of the grooves and was trying to get a foothold in another when—his hand slipped! The next moment he shot down the trough and back to the very spot upon which he had landed! Frantically he struggled to his knees, then to his feet, only to slip prone again. Then with a hiss and a roar the next wave came curling in. He was doomed!

The force of the water hurled him up the slippery trough, raised him high in the air and dropped him backward, helpless, into the spume at the base of the rock.

"Merciful Providence protect him! He's gone!" cried Sims, turning white.

Jack and Ray were numb with horror. Big O'Brien had been whisked from the face of the earth like a straw.

But before they could collect their scattered



wits Lanky Sims' voice was heard again above the roar of the water.

"Look! Quick! There he is! On the port side! You boy, grab him! There! See him!"

Ray saw a distorted mass of clothing and legs rise to the surface just under him. It was whirled round and round by the force of the undercurrent for a brief instant before it started to sink again. Blindly the lad reached over the side and clutched. His fingers closed upon a cold and clammy wrist, to which he clung despite the surging and tearing of the current.

Forgetful of the danger for the moment, Lanky Sims let go the tiller and reaching a long arm into the water seized hold of the big foreman too. Then together they dragged him over the gunwale and into the boat. And while Jack and Ray took care of the all but drowned foreman, Sims directed the whaleboat out of the lashing water and toward the open sea where there were only the long rollers to combat.

The two boys worked manfully over Big



O'Brien. First they got all of the water out of his lungs. Then with him lying prone in the bottom of the boat they started artificial respiration, as Jack had been taught it by the football coach at Drueryville Academy. For fully fifteen minutes the boys labored over the foreman while Sims and the rest of the crew looked on in silence. And gradually their efforts told, for O'Brien's eyelids quivered once or twice and finally opened. Two red spots began to show in his ashen cheeks, and after a few moments he regained consciousness.

"Phwat happened?—ugh— O, shur-re I know. The big wave caught me, huh?" he said rather thickly as he sat up.

"It didn't on'y ketch ye but it smashed t' life ha'af ouden ye," said Lanky Sims.

"How about Mr. War-rner," demanded O'Brien, turning and looking toward the big rock. Then for the first time the men in the boat thought of the engineer.

There on the top of Cobra Head stood the lighthouse builder. He had seen the accident and the rescue as well, and Jack could guess what his feeling must have been as he waited



there for a signal to tell him whether his foreman was alive or dead.

"Wave to him, O'Brien. Wave your hand and show him that you are still alive," cried Jack. And the big Irishman struggled to his feet and, holding on to Lanky Sims, waved and shouted as loud as he could.

Mr. Warner answered the signal with a warning wave, which told the men in the boat quite plainly that he wanted them to keep off and not attempt to land another man.

"Sur-r I'd like t' thr-ry anither fling at it jist t' show meself that I can't be bate be a duckin', but if the boss sez 'No,' thin 'No' 'tiz. Come on, Lank, thur-rn t' boat and we'll go back t' th' island."

During the return journey Jack and Ray kept their eye on Mr. Warner. They saw him scrambling about on the rock, making measurements and marking off various sections of the rugged Head. Then they saw him send a signal to the men on the cliff who waited to fire a lifeline to him. They saw, too, the puff of smoke from the little brass cannon and they watched the rocket with the line trailing out be-



hind it describe a big arc over the rock and fall into the sea beyond, dropping the rope almost into Mr. Warner's hands.

The engineer began to haul in immediately and presently he dragged out of the surf a heavier section of rope to which the line was fastened. This was the cable upon which the breeches-buoy was to be suspended, and Mr. Warner spent some time in making the end secure over the top of the big lump of granite that formed the cobra's head. The men on shore worked quickly at rigging the buoy, too, and by the time the boat crew had landed and made its way up the promontory, stone cutters were already being sent down to the rock to level its surface and build the tower that was to support the aerial cableway. And, when Jack saw this, he realized that Cobra Reef had been conquered and that the lighthouse was actually under way.



## CHAPTER VII

### UNDER ARREST

WITH the completion of the aerial cableway and the clearing of the surface of the rock the Hood Island construction camp became a very busy place. A score or more of men were to be seen on the big rock whenever the waves were not piling up on top of it (as always happened when a storm came in) and the donkey engine that operated the cableway was puffing and snorting from daylight until darkness settled down.

Jack and Ray found that their duties increased with the rush of work also, for besides their tasks in Mr. Warner's office there were numerous other small jobs about the camp that they could accomplish. But for all that they had plenty of time on their hands to roam about the rocky shores of the island, or take short trips in the dory that belonged to Captain Eli and was moored down off the sandy beach near the whaleboats. The boys made



frequent trips to Cobra Head, also traveling by way of the aerial cable of course. Indeed, Jack and Big O'Brien were the first to ride down to the rock, on a section of stone that was conveyed to the lighthouse site. This was more or less of a perilous trip and Big O'Brien insisted on accompanying the lad when he heard that he was going.

But with all these possibilities for a good time Ray seemed to become less interested in the construction work as the days went on. In truth, he developed a certain melancholy air which, after a time, became very noticeable. This, of course, puzzled Jack, as it did the engineer and the others of the camp who had become friendly with him. More than once Jack sought to gain his confidence and have him tell his troubles, but the boy always appeared to cheer up for the time and assure the youth from Vermont that he had not a single trouble in the world. Jack knew well that this was not true, however, and to add to the mystery of it all, Ray frequently strayed away from the camp in the evening or when he had no work to do and went wandering down along the rocky shore of the island until he came to a



secluded spot where he would sit and brood over his troubles for hours at a time.

It was after one of these mysterious disappearances one afternoon that Jack went in search of his companion, quite determined to get at the bottom of all that was upsetting his peace of mind. The lad from Drueryville had seen Ray steal away and go down the path that led to the little beach near where the whaleboats were moored. He watched him as long as he could, but when he saw Ray walk the entire length of the sandy strip and start climbing along the rock-strewn shore beyond, he decided to follow.

But Jack soon discovered that his chum had not gone far. Just on the other side of the beach he saw the lonesome figure perched upon a smooth chunk of granite, his back resting against a large boulder just behind him. Ray's hat was off and the wind was playing with his hair. He was staring off into space in a most preoccupied manner, and the expression on his face was that of a lad who was greatly disappointed over something.

So absorbed was he with his troubles that Jack managed to come up very close to him



before the young swordfisherman was aware of his presence. When he did notice the Vermonter, he seemed very much chagrined at being discovered and a sheepish smile wrinkled the corners of his mouth.

"Hello, Ray," said Jack, sitting down upon the rock beside him. "I hope you'll excuse me for following you, but—well, hang it all, you looked so glum that I just naturally worry over you. Something is on your mind, old chap, and I do wish that you would spit it out. Tell me all about it. Maybe I can help you or at least give you some advice."

"Pshaw, Jack, don't mind me. My troubles don't amount to a row o' pins to any one except myself. Shucks, let's forget about it."

"No, siree, now, Ray, I want to know. Look here; we've been pretty good friends since you came to the island in that whirlwind fashion, a couple of weeks ago, and I think that I should know all about your difficulties."

"Aw, I haven't any real troubles. I'm just disappointed, that's all. You see—aw—er—let's forget about it, will you?"

"No, no, Ray, come on, shout it out," insisted Jack.



"I tell you it's just disappointment, that's all. You see I had laid so much store by it that I—"

"By what?" demanded Jack.

"Why, by my model—my non-sinkable life-boat, you know. The one that Uncle Vance threw overboard."

"Oh, I see, now I understand. I'd forgotten all about it. Well, why don't you build a new model, old chap?"

"Why—er—well you see, Jack, I've been trying to, but, hang it all, I haven't the material, for one thing, and—and—well, I've—you see there are a lot of figures about it that I've forgotten. I don't know just how I did build the first one. It was made of sheet metal all soldered together and I can't get a bit of tin or sheet iron here. I tried to make one of wood but that don't go either. Gee, I am up against it. And I wanted to see if I couldn't earn enough money with it—aw, shucks, let's quit talkin' about it. There's no use in worrying you about it too, Jack."

"Well, I'm mighty interested, Ray," said Jack encouragingly. "What was the principle of the thing?"



"Why, just this, Jack. You remember when the *Titanic* was wrecked about a year ago? Sure you do. Well, when that happened there was a lot of talk about not enough lifeboats, and about the general unsafe condition of the boats that were being used on board the various steamers. That set me a-thinking and I decided to try and build a boat that wouldn't sink and could not turn over, no matter how hard a wave hit it. Then after months of pottering around I worked out my model which looked like a big pumpkin seed roofed over. It was all fitted up, airtight compartments in the bow and stern, and the keel was so balanced, and the roof so well made, that even if the boat should be launched upside down, it would right itself and not ship a drop of water. There was a little place for a motor which, of course, could not be put in the model, but could be put in a big boat of regulation lifeboat size. It could also be propelled by oars and it had a number of advantages over the old-fashioned open lifeboat."

"My, but that's interesting," said Jack; "I sure would like to see it."

"Well, I guess it'll be a long time before I



can build another and, by George, I'm getting older all the time. I'm nearly seventeen now."

"What of that?" said Jack.

"What of it? Why, I want to go to high school some time, and college too. I sort of hoped that I might make money enough out of my invention to pay my way through school. I can't wait until I am a full-grown man to go to 'prep' school, can I? And now that I've quit Uncle Vance I haven't a single person in the world to help me. Not that I could ever expect any real help from him. But then a fellow needs a grown-up friend or two, no matter how cussed mean they are to him at times. But Uncle Vance was dead set against my ever going to school again—said it would make me even lazier than I am. I'm not lazy, am I, Jack?"

"Indeed, you're not," said Jack, and then he fell to thinking, for Ray's remarks about school brought Jack's mind back to Drueryville Academy, and, of course, the first thing that he thought of in connection with the school was the football situation for the next Fall.

"Jiminy, I certainly wish that you had



made money out of your invention," he said after a moment.

"Why?" queried Ray in surprise.

"Well, we need a full-back out at Drueryville Academy and if you were going to go to 'prep' school I surely would see that you found your way over to Vermont. You'd make a corking full-back, Ray. Got the right build and all, and you're strong as a bull, too. Ever play football?"

"Ever play? No, but I'd like to. Hang it, Jack, I haven't ever been able to play at anything. Never had the chance that other boys get. All my life has been work and darned hard work, too. And when I haven't been working, I've been quarreling with Uncle Vance or trying to keep out of his way, either one," said Ray bitterly.

"Never mind," said Jack solicitously, for he saw how unhappy Ray really was. "Your time will come, just you wait and see. I'm going to speak to Mr. Warner about your schooling, anyway. Perhaps he can help you out with some good advice at least. Pshaw, come on, let's forget about your troubles. I'll tell you what we'll do. Let's go for a row in



Captain Eli's dory. We've never been down near the lower end of the island. I'd like to explore. Are you game for a row, Ray? Mr. Warner says that he will not have anything for us to do until some time to-morrow. How about it?"

"Sure enough," said the unhappy youngster and presently the two boys were climbing over the rocks back toward the little strip of beach where the boats waited, gently tugging at their mooring lines.

It was a wonderful July afternoon, with scarcely a cloud in the warm blue sky. Out beyond the reef the broad Atlantic rolled on lazily under the Summer sun, while inside even the currents that usually raced between the ledge of rocks and the island seemed to have become sluggish.

"Let me take the oars," said Ray, after the two lads had waded out and climbed aboard the dory, "I have the blues and there's nothing like some good husky exercise to work them out of a fellow's system."

Jack consented and shortly the little craft was slipping along through the water under the young swordfisherman's steady stroke. In



half an hour they had passed the southern end of the reef and gone beyond the reach of the currents into the open sea. Ray kept the boat about half a mile off the shore of the island and rowed steadily southward, apparently taking a great deal of pleasure in working the stiffness out of his muscular arms and back. As for Jack, he lay off in the stern of the boat thinking of nothing in particular.

Presently, however, Ray stopped rowing and appeared to listen. Then turning, he looked ahead and announced.

"Jack, there's a school of mackerel ahead of us. Look in the locker there under the stern thwart, and see if Captain Eli has any fishing tackle. Perhaps we can find a couple of jigs in there."

"Eh, how's that? How do you know there's a school of mackerel ahead? I see some gulls out there feeding on something but—"

"That's just it. I heard 'em squealing like a whole flock of cats. If you'd been around salt water as long as I have you'd know they are feeding on little menhaden and wherever there's a school of them you'll be sure to find mackerel—or pollock. If it's a school of pol-



lock then we *can* have some fun, providing, of course, we can find some fish lines. Pollock are the gamiest fish in the sea."

Jack became enthusiastic immediately and quickly began a search under the stern seat. In a moment he resurrected a dilapidated market basket half full of coils of line, fish hooks, jigs, and a double handful of clams.

"Fine!" exclaimed Ray, surveying the outfit. "We'll have fresh fish for supper all right. Here, Jack, break open one of those clams and cut out a chunk of the tough part. There, that's it. Now hook it onto that jig; just double it over the hook so, it doesn't make any difference whether you have the point covered or not. Now throw it over the stern, and let out about sixty feet of line while I row. You'll feel 'em take hold in a minute; they're coming this way."

Ray bent to the oars again and started the boat toward the flock of gulls that were flying close to the surface and diving in and out of the water, squeaking and calling at a furious rate. Jack had hardly got the jig overboard before the dory was among the fish. They were big fellows, according to Jack's way of thinking,



but Ray said that they were only young pollock. But Jack had no time to argue the matter, for the next second something struck his jig savagely and the heavy line shot through his fingers and scorched a blister on the flesh before the fish let go.

"Oh—wow," howled Jack, shaking his hand.

"Ho, ho, that was funny," laughed Ray. "Loop the line around your hand next time Jack, and snub him good. Then keep hauling in as hard as you can, or you'll lose him."

Jack hooked another piece of clam onto the jig and tossed it astern, and the moment he had the line looped about his hand came another savage jerk— Zipp-pp hissed the line through the water, but Jack snubbed back and started to haul away hand over hand, the fish thrashing from side to side and even jumping clear of the water in his mad effort to tear free.

"Wow, what a corker," cried Jack, as he swung the struggling thing into the dory.

"Oh, he isn't so big," said Ray. "Pollock grow sixty and seventy pounds and I've seen 'em even bigger than that. That's only a young one you caught. Weighs about five



pounds, I guess. This is a school of little ones, I tell you. Try again."

Jack hove the jig again and for the next fifteen minutes he was busy as could be hauling in the big silvery fish. They bit ravenously and before he knew it he had caught at least a score. Finally his fingers became so blistered and chafed that he simply had to quit.

"Here," he said, "you take the line, Ray. I'm through."

"All right," said Ray. "Keep rowing around in a big figure eight. Keep right in the school. Follow the birds. I'll see if I can't yank out a couple of big ones just for luck. I wish I had a pair of nippers, though—those are woolen gloves with the fingers cut. They protect your hands. All fishermen use 'em up here on the Maine coast."

But before Ray had caught more than a couple of fish, the surface of the water became suddenly quiet again and the troop of gulls, after a few farewell squeaks, dispersed and flew off in different directions.

"Hang it, just when I started to get interested the bloomin' things disappear. That's my luck. Too bad. They'll come to the sur-



face again somewhere else, but there's no use of our trying to follow them. They may come up a mile or so out to sea. Guess we're through fishing for to-day. I don't care though, do you?"

"No, only for your sake," said Jack. "I was selfish to keep the line so long."

"Oh, pshaw, don't mind me. I've had more fishing than a little. When a fellow has to do it for a living it ceases to be fun," said Ray with a smile, as he sat down in the stern and surveyed the catch.

"Jiminy," he added, "we've enough fish to feed the camp."

"I guess we have, but say, I'll bet that net over there is filled with 'em," answered Jack.

"Net? What net? Where?" asked Ray.

"Why, that net over there. See those buoys in toward the island? They are fastened to a net, aren't they?"

Ray looked in the direction in which Jack was pointing and saw a line of half a dozen black and white buoys dancing on the surface.

"No, Jack, those aren't net buoys. Those are lobster pots. Some one has a line of traps



set along here. Looks like he'd picked out a good place too. All rock bottom."

"Are those lobster traps?" asked Jack, becoming interested immediately.

"Sure they are. Net buoys are entirely different looking affairs."

"I never saw a lobster pot. What do they look like?" queried the Vermonter.

"Pshaw, don't you know what they are like. Let's row over and we'll haul one. I don't believe it would make any difference so long as we don't take any of the lobsters. I know it's considered a terrible thing among lobstermen for one man to haul another man's trap, but we won't steal anything."

"Oh, I have an idea what they look like. Never mind about pulling it up," said Jack.

"No, no, come on, we'll row over. I'll haul it. 'Twon't make a particle of difference. And besides there's no one around to see us. I wonder who owns it?"

"Why, perhaps that old fellow Captain Eli says lives on this end of the island. He's a lobsterman," said Jack as he headed the boat in the direction of the buoys.



"That's right, perhaps they are his," said Ray.

It was only a matter of a hundred yards or more to the buoy and soon Jack pulled the dory around close to the bobbing thing. Then Ray stood up and reaching the line attached to it began to pull it in hand over hand. Presently he reached a section of the line to which two tightly corked bottles were attached. He held them up for Jack to see, explaining in the meantime that they were fastened to the warping, which is the fisherman's term for the line, to keep it off the bottom so that it would not foul with the rocks. The bottles, he said, acted as floats which kept the warping midway between the rocky bottom and the surface.

Ray pulled some more and soon the big lobster pot came dripping from the water. It was a peculiar crate-like affair, shaped like half of a cylinder, and at either end was a pocket-like net with a hole in the very bottom through which the lobsters crawled to get at the bait suspended in a bag in the middle of the trap. There were four big green lobsters in the trap and innumerable brown rock crabs which



clicked their horny claws maliciously as Jack and Ray took hold of the trap.

"Say, but they look ugly, don't they?" exclaimed Ray as he looked between the slats.

"Ugly? You bet they are. If that big green fellow should get hold of your finger you'd lose it (I mean your finger) mighty quick."

"What do they use for bait?" asked Jack.

"Dead fish—flounders mostly, although—"

"'I there, throw that air trap hoverboard! Quick now! Look lively there, you bloomin' lobster piruts. Hoverboard wi' hit an' put hup yer 'ands er hi'll blow yer bloody 'eds hoff," shouted some one. And turning, the two lads found themselves facing a bewhiskered old fisherman with a wooden leg, who stood in the stern of a trim little sloop, the tiller in one hand and a tremendously big but old-fashioned revolver in the other.

"By George, it's the owner of the lobster traps," said Ray, shoving the contrivance overboard and putting his hands above his head. Jack looked at the blunderbuss, then having made up his mind that perhaps it would go off if urged, he too held up his hands.



"I got 'e now, I 'ave. I been a layin' fer t' two o' ye fer a week past. Says I t' myself says I, Mitch, Hole Topper, they'll show hup agin an' you can slip hout hin yer hole *Betsy Hanne* an' poak yer hole barker hunder their noses and there you 'ave 'em. An' hup you showed, an' 'ere I are wi' me *Betsy Hanne* and me hole barker, an' 'ere you are jest es neat en' snug wi' yer 'ands above yer 'ed and lookin' t' bloomin' crookedest crooks as ever was. An' now me an' me *Betsy Hanne* is goin' t' take both o' ye t' th' warden at Hustin's Pool an' 'e'll jug ye as tight as ever was. Honely which one o' you is th' lad as has t' 'nitials J. S.?"

The little sloop had come up in the wind in the meantime and the fisherman, still keeping the lads covered with the old revolver, had by means of a short boathook pulled the dory alongside.

"Come," he said impatiently, "which o' ye is hit 'as 'is 'nitials J. S.?"

"Why—er—ah—why those are my initials," stuttered the amazed Jack Straw, "but—but—how did you come to know them?"

"O-ho-ho-ho-Mister Innercent, 'ow did I



come t' know? Why I got yer watch as you so kindly left hin my traps, I did."

"My watch?—in your traps?" exclaimed Jack.

"I says a 'ow I found hit in my traps, ye pirut. Yes."

"Why—why—but how did it get there? It wasn't my watch you found. I'm sure of it."

"O-ho-ho-ho, hit wasn't 'is watch. O-ho-ho, blow me ef 'e ain't tryin' t' joke me. Looke 'er, young feller, you jest says a 'ow yer 'nitals is J. S. an' bein's I found 'e a-'aulin' o' my lobster traps hit ain't no doubt as you'r t' guilty party, 'specially as 'ow I found t' watch hin my trap. Oh, I figgered hit hall hout. You 'ad t' trap hup on t' side o' t' dory an' arter you 'ad got finished a-pinchin' t' lobsters as belongs t' me overboard you shoves t' trap wi' t' chain o' yer watch caught hin t' net. Hout slips yer watch an' you bein' hexcited an' hin a 'urry never misses hit till you gets 'ome. Then you sez, 'Where about 'ave I left my watch?' an' you don't know, see?"

"Why, that's all wrong," said Jack. "I never stole any of your lobsters and besides my watch hasn't disappeared."



"Looke 'ere, you young pirut, hif this ain't your watch then show me your watch." The old lobsterman held up a big silver timepiece attached to a silver chain.

"Pshaw, no; mine's gold," said Jack, feeling in his watch pocket. Then suddenly the expression on the lad's face changed. "Why—why—it's gone; where on earth—what has happened to my watch?"

"O-ho-ho. E-he-he, what's 'appened to 'is watch. T' blomin' pirut. Why 'ere hit his, lad; 'ere hit his."

"No, no. I know where it is. I loaned it to Captain Eli and—"

"O-ho-ho, a likely story, but just t' same I'm goin' t' tike 'e both t' th' warden at Haustin's Pool. 'E'll tike care o' ye. Come, 'op haboard t' *Betsy Hanne*. Lively now 'er I'll blow yer bloomin' 'eads hoff, blime me hif I don't."



## CHAPTER VIII

### LOBSTER PIRATES

THERE remained nothing for Jack and Ray to do but climb aboard. With the determined old fisherman standing there in the stern of the *Betsy Anne*, looking coldly along the barrel of the old "barker," as he called his pistol, the two lads felt that he had them at a disadvantage. From the age and condition of the revolver it did not look as if it could do very much damage. But nevertheless the two boys were not of a mind to experiment with its shooting qualities by making themselves the target. Therefore they made haste to obey the old salt's command, especially when he emphasized it by waving the "barker" very close to them. Also they moved forward into the bow of the boat at his direction. Then, as he tied the painter of Captain Eli's dory to a stern cleat and grasped the tiller of his own boat, he muttered:



“Now, blime me, wi’ all things shipshape, an’ two o’ th’ bloominest lobster pirates as ever was a-stowed awi in t’ bow, were hoff for Hustin’s Pool, Miss *Betsy Hanne*.” He let out the sheet and shoved over the tiller, and as if in answer to his suggestion the little boat filled her main sail and presently was scudding merrily through the water.

All three occupants of the boat were silent for some time after that, but the doughty captain kept his eyes fastened on the two boys in the bow and the “barker” within convenient reach.

After a time, however, the little old one-legged fisherman could stand the silence no longer, and began to muse once more, apparently addressing the *Betsy Anne* as before.

“Me bein’ a jest man as ’ow I are an’ me bein’ a right-minded person as ’ow I ’opes I are, ’ow can I g’ back on me bloomin’ senses? ’Ere I been a-findin’ o’ my traps robbed, these weeks past, an’ ’ere I comes along hin me hole *Betsy Hanne* an’ finds these ’ere two a-robbin’ of ’em and then I says t’ one o’ ’em, says I, ‘Whose ’nitials is J. S.?’ an’ ’e says, says ’e, ‘My ’nitials is J. S.,’ an’ I says, then, ‘’Ere’s



your watch as I found hin my lobster traps,' says I, an' then 'e ups an' denies hit and says, says 'e, 'Hit ain't my watch, 'ere's my watch,' an' goes fer t' find 'is watch, an' then seems surprised like 'cause it ain't hin 'e's pocket which o' course hit ain't 'cause hit's in my 'and all t' time, an' then 'e says, says 'e, 'Oh I left hit 'ome wi' Cap'n Eli,' says 'e, an' I ax ye, me bein' a jest man as ever was an' a right-thinkin' hole sea-dog as is, I ax ye, what for are I t' think?"

"I tell you, we are not lobster thieves. We are from the construction camp over on Hood Island. We're friends of Captain Eli's—Captain Eli Whittaker, the keeper of Hood Island light," asserted Jack, who had become very indignant listening to the old man's recital.

"O-ho-ho, 'ear 'im now. Blime me hif 'e don't talk back as is just what all crooked lobster piruts does. Look 'ere, sonny, 'ow's hit you was a-raisin' o' my lobster pots then?" asked the lobsterman.

"Why, I hauled it because Jack here never saw a lobster pot before and he was just curious. I wanted to show him. We didn't take a single fish and we didn't intend to. I know



it was wrong for us to even haul it but then we aren't thieves. And we don't know who's been taking your lobsters either," said Ray, who had also become irritated by the old salt.

"Keel 'aul me, listen at 'im. 'E says as 'ow 'e's friend 'ere ain't nuvver seen a lobster pot. O-ho-ho, a likely story, young feller, O-ho-ho."

"It's true, though," insisted Jack. "We are friends of Captain Eli. Why, that's his dory we have been using."

"Listen at 'im now, listen. 'E says as 'ow that's Cap'n Eli's dory when Cap'n Eli's dory is brown painted," mused the old tar.

"Pooh, you don't use your eyes," exploded Ray in disgust. "Can't you see that that dory has just been repainted green."

"As fer my a-usin' my heyes, mebbly I does an' then agin' mebbly I don't. Me not bein' a man give for to arger enny, I won't say 'Ay' ner 'Nay.' But I say, say I, hif that air his Cap'n Eli's dory painted green, why t' on'y way as two o' the bloomines' lobster piruts as ever was come by hit is they come by hit crooked, same has they comes by ever'thing else. Cap'n Eli ain't goin' for t' lend his dory as is painted brown to two o' t' crookedest lobster stealers



as was ever fit for to walk t' plank, blime me. Go for t' conterdick that will 'e," answered the fisherman with finality.

"Oh, pshaw, what's the use of arguing with him," said Jack in disgust.

"Right an' so, right an' so. Hit ain't no use for t' argey wi' me. Save hit all for t' bloomin' warden. 'Es paid for t' argey, 'e is, an' argey 'e will, that's sartin'."

"I hope he's easier to convince than our friend with the peg leg here. But I guess he will. I've been to Austin's Pool before with Uncle Vance and they all seem civilized there at least," said Ray to Jack, under his breath.

Again the three lapsed into silence while the *Betsy Anne* slipped away on a long port reach. Hood Island dropped behind rapidly, and off the starboard bow Jack and Ray could see a thin gray speck on the horizon which they concluded must be the mainland.

"How long does it take this craft of yours to make Austin's Pool or wherever it is you are taking us?" demanded Jack of the skipper a little later when the *Betsy Anne* had come about and started on a starboard tack.

"Has soon's any craft o' 'er size kin make



hit," was the lobsterman's ambiguous reply.

"Huh, that's definite," muttered the lad from Vermont.

"Well, then I shud say as 'ow she'd make hit soon enough for Warden Williams to lock two capital lobster piruts hup before supper," added the fisherman.

"Jiminy," said Jack, quite disturbed. "That means we won't get back to Hood Island until long after dark, Ray, even if we can convince this warden fellow, whoever he is, that we are not lobster thieves."

"Ood Hisland," exclaimed the lobsterman. "Ye ain't expectin' ever for t' git back there again, are 'e? Why, that warden jest goes daft on lobster piruts like you. 'E'll keep 'e in 'is lockup for a year or two, mebbly three," assured the lobsterman.

The thoughts of such a possibility really began to worry Jack. He knew perfectly well that he and Ray could convince any fair-minded person that they were not lobster pirates. In truth, if worse came to worse, they could send for Mr. Warner and some of their friends in the construction camp and in that way prove their innocence. But at best that



would take a whole day and perhaps longer, and he had visions of spending time in some vile-smelling country jail until assistance arrived.

Such disturbing thoughts occupied them both for most of the afternoon. They conversed in undertones occasionally, but for the most part they were silent, thinking of their strange predicament and wondering what their friends back on Hood Island would think when they did not turn up at the sound of Bongo's supper call that evening.

As the sun dropped lower in the western sky a stiffer breeze sprung up and the *Betsy Anne* redoubled her speed. Already she had approached so close to the mainland that Jack and Ray could hear the grumble of the surf that rolled in upon the rock-strewn beach, and it was not long after that when the little boat was headed into a big crescent-shaped bay about four miles across where the beach was broad and of the whitest sand. At one horn of the crescent was a little hamlet and innumerable docks, while far across on the other side was a long low sandy point which stretched out into the water and was capped with what ap-



peared at a distance to be a number of dilapidated sheds. Jack learned later that this sandy cape was called Frenchman's Point, and that the shanties he saw were the dwellings of a horde of French Canadians, half-breed Indians and other riffraff that lived on what they could find or steal along the beach.

The *Betsy Anne* headed in for the docks at the Pool. The long low piers were fairly crowded with craft of all kinds, ranging from tiny motor boats and fishing sloops to long low-bank schooners and trim-looking trawlers. This was Austin's Pool, one of the best-known fishing villages in that section of Maine, and the point from which fish and lobsters were sent to Portland, Boston, and New York.

Fishermen swarmed over the dock. Some were loading their little vessels with tubs of bait and butts of water, others were unloading their day's catch, while still others were just sitting around on the string pieces or tie posts, smoking and gossiping and waiting for the time to put out for a night's work on near-by fishing grounds.

Old Mitchell took particular care to bring the *Betsy Anne* alongside of the most popular



dock of all and as he came about and dropped the main sail of his sloop he was greeted by a chorus from the pier.

"How's luck over Hood Island way, Mitch?"

"How many markers this time, English?"

"What's the haul?"

To this last the lobsterman answered by waving his "barker" and pointing to the two lads in the bow.

"What's t' 'aul, say you? Why, 'ere's t' 'aul. Two o' t' bloominest lobster piruts as ever was. Found 'em a robbin' o' my traps right afore my heyes," he said with a grin.

Instantly Jack and Ray became the center of attention. Seamen gathered from all quarters, it seemed, and looked the lads over, as Old Mitchell forced them to climb the landing ladder.

Of course the two boys felt greatly humiliated at all this, especially since the lobsterman still insisted on flourishing his revolver.

"Aw, say, there's no need of your parading that revolver, is there?" demanded Jack, who had become quite indignant. "We're your prisoners and we'll go with you peaceably so you can stick it back into your pocket. You



make us look like a couple of desperate characters that way."

"Desprut? Now blow me hif ye ain't desprut. I shed say I won't put me 'barker' awi. I ain't tikin' no chances of your a-runnin' hoff, I ain't. Go on, walk hup a'ead o' me now," said the old mariner with emphasis.

"Be keerful, Mitch," said one of the fishermen. "They looks t' me like murderers. See t' willinus mug on that air one with t' blue jacket."

"Been a-stealin' yer lobsters, eh, Mitch?" said another. "Wall, t' last lobster pirut got ten years. Like es not t' judge'll give these 'ere lads just es much."

"Look a bad lot, they does," remarked some one else.

All this and a great deal more was said by the fishermen as the lads walked up the dock in front of Old Mitchell. Of course they felt humiliated. Who could feel otherwise under the circumstances?

From the pier the lads proceeded up the board walk of a narrow street lined with low sheds and dingy stores which reeked with the odor of fish. Their alert guard stumped along



behind them still with the revolver at their backs.

But presently as they went on the thumping of Mitchell's wooden leg suddenly ceased and immediately the old man set up a great hue and cry.

"'Ere, 'ere, stop 'em, they're a-runnin' awi. Stop 'em, I say."

Jack and Ray stopped in surprise and turned to look and what they saw almost convulsed them with laughter.

There was the lobsterman in the middle of the board walk struggling to release the end of his peg leg from the grip of a knot hole into which he had stepped, and at the same time trying to keep the lads covered with his revolver. It was extremely ludicrous and the boys simply could not help laughing at the old man's plight.

"Ha, ha, ho, ho, he stepped in a knot hole," cried Jack in glee.

"Now's our chance to run, he, he, ho, ho, ho. He couldn't shoot or run or do much of anything now, could he? Look at him squirm," shouted Ray.

"What's the use of running? That would



make us look guilty. Ha, ha, ha, this is funny. Come on, let's help the old duffer out of his fix," said Jack.

And much to the amazement of the lobsterman, the two "desprut" lobster pirates returned and pried his wooden appendage out of the hole into which it had been wedged.

"Well, blow me, this is funny," said Mitchell, when he was again on a firm foundation. "I thought as 'ow you'd run hoff when ye seed me in such a pickle."

"We told you we'd go along peaceably, didn't we?" said Jack, still giggling.

"Keel 'aul me, so ye did, so ye did," said their captor, and for the rest of the journey up the narrow street he stumped along beside them with the revolver concealed in his pocket.

The trio stopped, at Mitchell's direction, before a dingy building over the door of which hung a faded notary's sign, bearing the name of William Williams. The lobsterman pushed open the door and the two lads preceded him into the dim interior. A cloud of thick tobacco smoke filled the place, and the lads were not long in discovering that it emanated from a tremendous pipe being smoked



by an equally tremendous individual who sat behind a desk in one corner of the room. He was a giant of a man, but for all that he had a good-natured face, and Ray and Jack liked him immediately. There was another person in the room also, a boy of about Ray's age and not unlike him in build and features. He sat at a smaller desk against the opposite wall and was evidently Warden Williams' assistant.

"Well, 'ere I are, Warden, 'ere I are wi' two o' t' bloominest funniest lobster piruts as ever I sees. 'Ere I finds 'em a-'aulin' o' my lobster traps in broad daylight an' one o' 'em says as 'ow 'is 'nitals is t' same es on 'is watch what I found in my lobster traps t' other day, an' yet 'e's all fer denyin' as 'e is a thief, blime 'e. Now hif—"

"What? What's all this stuff you're tryin' t' say?" demanded the warden, who was very much puzzled by the jumble of words Old Mitchell had just delivered.

"Why, it's this way, sir," said Jack, speaking up. "Ray and I are from the Hood Island lighthouse construction camp. This afternoon we went out in Captain Eli's dory for a



row. We caught some fish too, and by chance ran across one of Mr. Mitchell's lobster pots. I come from Vermont and I never saw a lobster trap in my life or knew how lobsters were caught and I asked Ray here to tell me something about them.

"Well, Ray volunteered to pull up one of the traps to show me what they looked like and just when we had hauled it and were looking at it, along came the owner here and arrested us for lobster stealing. We never took any of his lobsters and never intended to. Then he asked if my initials were J. S. and I said that they were. My name is John Monroe Strawbridge. Then he felt certain that he had caught the men who had been robbing his lobster pots. You see, a few days ago he had found a watch and chain caught in one of his lobster pots and the watch bore the initials J. S. It was not my watch, however, for mine has the initials J. M. S., and furthermore my watch is now in the possession of Captain Eli Whittaker, the keeper of Hood Island light. I loaned it to him several weeks ago and never thought to get it back. I told Mr. Mitchell all this, but he would not believe me and arrested



us at the point of a revolver and brought us here. Do I state the case right, Mr. Mitchell?"

"Right has ever was," said the old lobsterman, quite surprised to hear Jack make such a confession. "Right an' proper as ever was an' 'ere's t' watch, sir."

Mitchell brought forth the big silver timepiece and laid it on the table before the warden.

"That isn't my watch," asserted Jack. "Mine's gold." He said the last with no little pride.

But the warden was not listening to him. He was examining the watch instead, and there was a certain eagerness about him as he turned the heavy timepiece over and over in his hand.

"You found this in your lobster pot?" he demanded.

"Keel 'aul me hif I didn't, sir, an' I can tell 'e 'ow hit got there, too."

"Pooh, don't take t' trouble. I know. I lost a watch on a lobster pot once myself. Chain caught in the net and when I shoved the trap overboard it jerked the watch out of my pocket and overboard it went. Lots of watches have been lost that way."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Mitchell.



"Say, do you know who this belongs to?" said the warden. "Do you really know who's been tampering with your lobster traps?"

"Why, 'im as says 'is 'nitials is J. S.," said the lobsterman, pointing with his thumb to Jack.

"Pshaw, no. That watch belongs to John Salmon—Salmon Jack, you know him. The cutthroat over at Frenchman's Point. Why, I've been trying to get some evidence on him for the last six months and this is the best we've found yet. This is his watch all right. I've seen it before and so has many another man."

"Eh, what, blime me? Then 'e mean t' say these 'ere lads ain't lobster piruts?" demanded Mitchell incredulously.

"Why, I don't believe they are. They look like honest lads," said the warden.

"Well, keel 'aul me, now I come t' think on't they do that. My mistake, lads, axin' yer parding, my mistake," said the old man, quite put out at the turn affairs had taken. "I 'opes ye'll excuse an hole sea-dog as is on'y got one leg. I ax yer parding, I does."

"Tut, tut, don't mention it," said Jack and Ray together, as they shook the old fellow's



hand. "We only hope you'll take us back to Hood Island with you."

"I'd be 'onored, lads, 'onored. I on'y wish I 'adn't brung 'e awi."

"I'm mighty glad you did," said the warden, "for you've brought the best piece of evidence I've ever been able to get against the worst lobster pirate on the Maine coast. The lobster patrol has been looking to get something on him for a long time and now, by George, if you'll help me get out a warrant against him, we'll arrest him. We'll raid Frenchman's Point this very night and arrest him and two or three others I have warrants for."

"An' hif ye git t' beggar wi' now, jest let me 'ave one crack at 'im wi' a b'layin' pin er such like," said Mitchell truculently.

"We'll think about that afterward, but, by hookey, we'll get Salmon Jack to-night or I'll resign my job as chief of the lobster patrol. Dave, you go get Steve Basset, Ben Emery, Joe Milliken an' whoever else you can find and swear 'em all in as deputies. Tell 'em we're going to raid Frenchman's Point to-night and to meet me at the long dock at half-past eight."

The lad in the corner of the room left the



dingy office immediately. Then the warden turned to Mitchell and said, "You'd better come along too, if you want to see some fun. You can take care of our boats while we land on the point. Then you'll be able to get a good look at the man who robbed your traps for we'll bring him back with us or I'll quit being an officer."

"May we go too?" exclaimed Jack and Ray in one breath. "We're pretty husky."

"Sure thing. I'll swear you in as deputies too. This will be a big night, you can bet. We're after the scalps of several men besides Salmon Jack and they all hang out at the point."

"Whoop-e-e-e, great!" exclaimed Jack.

"I'm keen for excitement," said Ray.

"All right, boys, you'll get enough of it, I guess. In the meantime you two and Mitchell can come on up to my house and have supper. We'll start from the long dock at eight-thirty."



## CHAPTER IX

### THE RAID

**W**ITH the setting of the sun a light mist formed and hung above the surface of the big crescent-shaped bay on which Austin's Pool was located. The shadowy blanket was just heavy enough to dim the side lights of the little vessels that were moving in and out of the harbor, going to or returning from the fishing grounds, and to make the craft themselves phantom-like and ghostly as they flitted by.

Jack and Ray, with Warden Williams and Old Mitchell, were not the first to arrive at the end of the long dock which was the appointed place of meeting for the party that was to raid Frenchman's Point. Indeed, as they made their way down the pier they could see a group of shadowy figures standing about the structure, the glowing openings of their pipe bowls making dull red sparks in the grayed darkness.



The matter of which kind of a boat would be best to take the party across the bay was under discussion when the warden and his three assistants arrived. Some advised the use of sail boats which would approach the Point in silence, while others suggested motor boats because of their superior speed. The chief of the expedition soon settled the question, however, by suggesting that Mitchell's boat, the *Betsy Anne*, which was known to be one of the speediest of its size in that vicinity, be used to convey part of the group. Joe Milliken's sloop was chartered to carry the remainder. There were twenty men all told, which provided ten to each boat, thus allowing all to travel in comfort.

Before embarking, however, a council of war was held, for every man of the twenty was decidedly eager to have the expedition a success. Not one of them had the slightest liking for the riffraff of Frenchman's Point and they said so in rather crude but forceful language. Indeed, almost every fisherman and lobsterman at the Pool had some grudge against Salmon Jack and other men of the no-



torious settlement across the bay, and they were more than eager to pay up old scores. Nets had been cut or stolen, lobsters and even lobster traps and lobster cars had disappeared, and the fishermen were quite certain that the honest old seamen who put in at the Pool were not to blame for these outrages.

In truth, the fact that Old Mitchell had actually secured evidence by means of which arrests and convictions could be made pleased every one in the fishing village who had heard of it so far, and probably Warden Williams could have had a hundred deputies if he had wanted them. His assistant, June Emery, whom Jack and Ray had seen in the warden's office that evening and whom Mr. Williams had sent to organize the posse, had been discreet, however, and had only told the news of the proposed raid to the men whom he knew Mr. Williams was anxious to have as members of his party.

Every man of them had come armed in some way or another. One or two had guns, but most of them carried clubs or short-handled, ugly looking mallets, which Ray informed Jack



were called "muckles" and were used by cod-fishermen to kill the big fish as they were hauled aboard the dories out on the banks.

The conference on the wharf's end lasted fully fifteen minutes and finally resulted in Warden Williams outlining a plan of action.

"Look here, boys," he said. "It'll be about half-past nine when we reach t' P'int. By that time ha'af of the population of the shanties will be in Fred King's hang-out, which is the only social center those heathens have. I suggest we land on the P'int as quickly as we can and go up and surround the rum shop. Then I'll go inside and arrest whoever I want, and if they try to scatter, we'll buckle into 'em and arrest every one we can lay hands on, even if we can't prove anything agin' 'em. How's that?"

"Right's a fiddle," said several.

"Mighty smart figgerin'," assured others.

"All right," said Warden Williams. "Now, boys, tumble aboard the boats. Mitchell, you take your load, and when we land you stand by your boat. Joe, you get your load and when we reach there let June Emery stand by your boat."



"Aw, Mr. Williams, does that keep me out of the fracas?" asked June, who had come around by the side of Jack and Ray.

"Well, I don't know," said Mr. Williams, slowly scratching his head. "Seems sort of mean to keep you out of it. I guess Mitch, here, can watch the two boats if you're keen to mix it up with the rest. All right, you can be one of the fightin' force."

At this gratifying news, Jack and Ray could see the lad's face brighten and they were glad for his sake that he was going to share whatever excitement might attend the raid. All three lads kept close together and found a place in Mitchell's boat during the scramble of embarking.

With the men aboard, the respective skippers were not long in casting off and presently the two boats were racing through the mist, the swift little *Betsy Anne* taking the lead immediately.

To Jack and Ray there was a peculiar fascination about the night's work. A primitive instinct seemed to work to the surface when they realized that they were slipping along silently through the black water, bent on sur-



prising the lobster pirates. Indeed, the spirit of the expedition was so strong that before the boats were half way to the Point men and boys were talking in whispers and even the swish and gurgle under the bow seemed to become subdued.

"Say, but this is exciting," whispered Jack to June Emery, who sat at his elbow.

"You bet it is. We're in for a rough time too, I'm a-thinking. These Frenchmen ain't any children when it comes to scrapping, and they're liable to get their bad blood up before the night's over and knife a couple of us. There's been some wild doin's over there at the Point sometimes when the whole crew was filled full of licker. Fred King sells licker right out in the open, even though it's agin' the law in Maine. They're a bad lot, I tell you."

"I know French Canadians and half-breeds," said Ray. "One got loose down in Ascog one night after he'd been out getting tight, and before they got him into the lockup he'd laid three men up for repairs. They've bad blood in them, I guess."

"Jiminy, I wonder what will break loose to-night, then?" asked Ray breathlessly.



"We'll know in mighty short order now, for I can see lights out ahead there in the mist and I guess they come from the shanties on the Point. Some of their houses are built pretty well down on the beach," said June.

Jack and Ray looked out past the bulging jib and saw tiny specks of yellow through the gray darkness. Others saw these pin points of light too, for a murmur went 'round the boat and the lads could hear the men gathering their clubs and mallets together. As for Jack, he had armed himself with a weighty cudgel which he had found in Mr. Williams' woodshed and as the boat approached the beach he took a firm grip upon this formidable weapon. Ray had equipped himself in a similar manner, while June carried a stout looking hickory ax-haft.

Fortunately the boats approached Frenchman's Point on the bay side and consequently there were no breakers to make landing difficult. Indeed, Old Mitchell ran the *Betsy Anne* head on for the beach and grounded her without making the slightest noise. Milliken's boat arrived a moment later and in less than five minutes the entire posse was ashore and ready for action.



But few moments were wasted in getting the lay of the land, for most of the men knew Frenchman's Point well enough to make any building there in any kind of a mist. That being the case, Warden Williams took the lead and in a jiffy the men were trudging through the sands as silently as so many specters. As they moved on up the beach the lights became more numerous and now and then the little band passed within a stone's toss of one of the many dilapidated shanties that made up the colony.

Soon Jack found that they were proceeding down what appeared to be a street. There were shacks and shanties on either side and in one place there were strips of bark and pieces of old timber. This was evidently meant to serve as a sidewalk, but sand had blown up and covered it completely in many places. No one appeared to be awake about the place, for the men did not encounter a single person. Indeed, the only signs of life were the sparks of yellow light that glimmered through the mist and the muffled voices in the distance.

It was toward the point from which the voices sounded that Warden Williams led his



followers. The lights of Fred King's hang-out soon became discernible, and when they did the men proceeded more cautiously, some of them crouching low and moving along with stealthy tread, although there was no reason for such caution since the sand muffled their footsteps.

Once more Jack thrilled with the primitive instinct of the hunter. It did not take much of an imagination to conjure up feathered head-dresses instead of the so'westers the fishermen wore, and tomahawks and spears instead of clubs and mallets. Indeed, for the moment he felt exactly as if he had been transported back a century or more and was a member of an Indian raiding party about to swoop down upon a log cabin filled with settlers.

But he could not afford to give such thought playroom in his mind very long, for presently Mr. Williams halted the party and pointed out a low building not fifty feet distant. Light was glowing from its windows and above the shouts of laughter and the loud talking could be heard the discordant jangle of a dance hall piano.

"There's Fred King's place and from the



noise I calc-late there's a full house an' plenty doin'," said Mr. Williams. "Now, boys, surround the building and lie down in the sand until you hear things begin to happen. I'm goin' to take four or five with me an' kick my way into the place. Who wants to come along?"

Jack and Ray crowded forward with several others while the rest of the party started to surround the building.

"All right, boys, come on, an' if a free fight starts, the rest of you pile right in behin' us and crack as many heads as you see. I'm going after Salmon Jack, Long Aleck, and whoever else I see in there," said the warden as he started forward with his detachment of followers at his heels.

On his way around to the front of the building the warden drew a huge revolver from under his coat and cocked the hammer. Then as he reached the narrow porch that stretched in front of the doorway he muttered under his breath:

"Be ready, lads; here goes."

The next instant there was the tramping of many feet on the porch and a bang as Mr.



Williams threw open the door and leapt inside, his revolver leveled.

"Hands up," he roared as he advanced, followed closely by the five men who had come to help him make the arrests.

In the brief pause that followed Jack caught a glimpse of a smoke-filled room furnished with dirty, grimy-looking round tables and a big flat piano. The place was crowded with disreputable looking men. They were all swarthy and ugly of feature and Jack appraised them as about the worst looking lot of individuals he had ever set eyes upon.

At the roared command of the warden, every man turned and faced the doorway, and when they saw the leveled revolver, backed up by determined faces and heavy looking clubs, they at once put their hands above their heads. Then before they could recover from their surprise Mr. Williams pointed out four of them with a wave of his revolver, calling each one of them by name.

"You, Salmon Jack, an' Long Aleck, come out here, an' you Jean Bastian, and Paul Nez there, come on. You're all under arrest. I've warrants for each one o'—"



CRASH!

Jack heard the rattle of glass and tin and the place was in total darkness! Some one had thrown a chair and smashed the big swinging oil lamp in the center of the room, putting it completely out. And the next instant came the cry:

“Da warden! Gat heem! Queek! Queek!—”

Things began to happen in earnest after that. Indeed, events transpired so swiftly during the next five minutes that Jack could hardly believe that so much could happen in so short a time. There was the rush of feet and the muttering of the Frenchmen as they closed with the men in the doorway. Then came another rush from the rear as the rest of the posse came up. Jack was quite undetermined what to do. He could hear the voices of his friends and he could hear the curses of the Frenchmen, but for the life of him he could not tell which was which, and indeed for a moment he was helplessly jostled one way and the other by the swaying fighters, and afraid to wield his club for fear of hitting some one of his own party.

But presently a big fist shot out of the dark-



ness and landed a stinging blow on his cheek. That settled the lad's indecision. The club came down with a whack on the spot where the head behind that hand should have been. And it must have found its mark, for it landed solidly and was immediately followed by an explosion of French oaths.

Again Jack struck and again the club landed. But this time it was seized and wrenched from his hand. The lad realized on the instant that he would feel the club next unless he could lay hand upon the man who had torn it from his grasp. Like a bull dog he leapt forward and grappled with his assailant. Then with a thump and a grunt from the man on the bottom they both landed upon the floor and began rolling over and over, pummeling each other with their fists.

It was no mean antagonist that Jack had selected, as the lad realized when he felt the weight of the Frenchman. Nor did he have a soft fist or playful touch either. Indeed, every time that fist landed, Jack felt dazed for the moment. But he gave as much as he took. Every time his arms were free he drove a solid



right at his enemy and each one brought forth a grunt and a string of curses.

Over and over they rolled. Sometimes they struggled to their feet, only to trip over tables and chairs and go crashing down again, and all the time they were working away from the center of the turmoil which was about the door and out upon the narrow porch. Indeed, as they swayed backward and forward Jack suddenly realized that they had fought their way clear across the room, for presently they brought up with a bang and a discordant jangle against the piano, tripped over the stool and crashed to the floor once more.

But this time the Frenchman was on top of Jack and had one of the lad's hands pinned fast to the floor. The Vermonter struck with the other at the ugly face which he felt, rather than saw, close to his own. It was a stinging blow, for the Frenchman roared with pain. Then in his frenzy his big hand reached out and clutched Jack about the throat. For a moment the lobster thief did not seem to realize his advantage, but when he did his grip tightened about the boy's windpipe.

Jack thrashed and punched as hard as he



could but the Frenchman had him pinned fast and did not seem to mind the boy's blows at all. Jack was frantic! The grip seemed to tighten! The veins in his neck burned under the pressure, and his head swam with dizziness! His lungs, too, seemed on the point of bursting with the air that was pent up in them! He grew sick and faint! Was this the end? Would the Frenchman hold on forever! Couldn't he shake the big man off! Was he—

Jack's right hand had been groping about on the floor for something to strike with. Suddenly it closed upon the iron pivot of the piano stool. Grasping it thus, the seat made an excellent mallet and with all his might Jack struck once, twice, three times, at the face that bent above him!

Jack felt the grip on his throat relax and the man who had pinned him down fell helplessly across his body. The lad tried to throw him off, but his strength was almost gone. Once more he tried but this effort was weaker than the last, and with a third attempt he fainted.

. . . . .

The sensation of a dipper of salt water being



dashed into his face aroused Jack to consciousness. Never had cold seawater felt so pleasant. In spite of the fact that it was all running down his neck and into his shirt, Jack lay still and let himself be deluged again before he opened his eyes and sat up. He was lying in the bottom of the *Betsy Anne* with Ray and Warden Williams bending over him.

"What do you want to scare a fellow most to death for? Are you all right now, Jack?" asked Ray with great concern.

"Why, why—well, I guess I am— Say give me a dipper full of real water—er—ah, white water—aw, I mean fresh water. I'm as thirsty as a horse and my throat—ugh." Jack felt tenderly of his neck as he spoke.

"Sure, here you are, son," said the warden.

Jack drank gratefully. Then as he passed the dipper back to Mr. Williams, he asked:

"Well, did you get Salmon Jack?"

"Did we get him?" exclaimed the warden.

"Why, lad, you laid him out so cold he hasn't come to yet. Though I calculate he will by the time we reach the Pool. He's over in Milliken's boat. They're workin' on him now. What did you hit him with, son, he's almost—"



"What did I hit him with? Why, was that Salmon Jack I buckled into?" exclaimed the boy from Drueryville in surprise.

"You bet it was. And it's a wonder to me he didn't knife you. We thought he had when we saw the two of you all in a heap on the floor. Guess he didn't have his dirk with him. What did you hit him with?"

"Well, you see he was choking me and—I guess I found the top of the piano stool," said Jack.

"I thinks as 'ow 'e's lucky ye didn't 'ave a mind t' 'it 'im wi' t' pianner hinstid. T' seat made an' hawful dint as 'twas," said Old Mitchell dryly, as he shifted the tiller a little to draw the *Betsy Anne* into her course.

"Hello, Mr. Mitchell," said Jack, turning toward the lobsterman whom he could discern but dimly through the mist which had thickened considerably. "Say, are you going to take us to Hood Island?"

"'Eavens no, leastwise not t' night," said the one-legged mariner as he spat over the side of the boat. "Won't t'morrer do jest as well?"

"No, no, you can't go back to-night. T' trip is too long and dangerous. Stay at my



house and let English here take you back in the morning," said Warden Williams.

"Thank 'e, Warden, but I ain't 'customed t' leave t' *Betsy Hanne* hin a strange port. I'll stick by t' craft, though t' boys kin go 'ome wi' ye. There ain't beddin' 'nough aboard fer three, anyway," said Mitchell.

"All right," consented Jack, "only I'm very much afraid Mr. Warner and our friends at the camp will be worried about us. I really don't feel much like going back before I get some sleep, though. I'm about all in."

"So am I," said Ray with a yawn.

"Well, we'll raise t' pier head-lights at t' Pool in a few minutes now and then as soon as we git our prisoners in t' lockup we can all tumble into bed. I calc-late that— Hi, Mitchell, look out there— Them lights there— Quick! It's a boat—she'll run us down! Where's that fish horn!"

Warden Williams grasped a long tin horn and began to blow furiously.

Jack and Ray both looked and beheld the dimmed lights of a sailing vessel coming out of the mist and dead toward them. But Old Mitchell had seen them too, and in a moment he



became a man of action. He saw that he could not cross the on-coming vessel's bow without being run down, so he threw over the helm and hauled in upon the sheet and in a jiffy the *Betsy Anne* had come up into the wind and almost to a full stop. At the same time the old man shouted at the top of his voice:

"Ay, there, port yer 'elm, port 'er, ye bloody lubbers. Why n't ye look where yer goin'. Blime 'e hif 'e ain't awkkerd."

The man at the wheel of the larger vessel had acted as quickly as Mitchell, however, and the next moment a big yawl slipped through the fog not ten feet from the *Betsy Anne*. And as the ghostly craft faded out of sight again, Ray seized Jack by the arm and asked:

"Jack, did you get a good look at her?"

"No," said the young Vermonter. "Why?"

"Well it was a yawl—and—and—oh, well, it looked sort of familiar, that was all."



## CHAPTER X

### THE CHASE

**J**ACK awoke with a start. He knew instinctively that some one had been gazing at him while he slept and his feeling was that of impending trouble. He sat up quickly and turned to find Ray's eyes fastened upon him. The erstwhile swordfisherman was sitting up in bed, his back resting against the head board and his arms clasped about his knees.

"Hi you, Ray! Why, you startled the life out of me. What are you sitting there like a stone idol for, cheating an honest fellow out of his sleep, by staring at him with trouble in your eyes. How long have you been awake?"

"Who? Me?" asked Ray absently.

"Yes, you. Who did you think I meant? The bed post? Say, you're worried, aren't you? What's sticking in your crop now? I'll bet you've been sitting there half of the night. Hang it, Ray, what is the matter, anyway?" demanded Jack.



"Oh, nothing, I was just thinking, that's all."

"Thinking? About what? I'll bet it was that blamed old model lifeboat of yours, wasn't it?"

"Well, something like that," said Ray with a sheepish grin.

"Now, I know you're lying to me," said Jack. "You weren't thinking about the model at all or you wouldn't have confessed so quickly. You were worrying about something else."

"No, no, Jack, the model was in my mind—a little, anyway. Come on, let's get up. I've been awake a long time, waiting for you to turn out. Mr. Williams has been up nearly an hour. I heard his wife call him for breakfast. Come on, get a wiggle on, for I think I smell some good old fried clams. Um-m-m, ah—just think how they'll taste," said Ray, smacking his lips as he hopped out of bed and began to pull on his trousers.

Jack tried to be equally agile, but when he bounded to the floor he let out a whoop of distress, for it seemed as if every muscle in his body had been stretched out of shape. He was sore from his violent exercise of the night be-



fore, and there were bumps and bruises all over him, not to mention a puffed-up lip which felt about thrice its natural size.

"Jiminy, but I'm stiff," he grunted as he sat down on the edge of the bed and began to pull on his stockings.

"I'm a little stiff myself," confessed Ray, stretching his strong arms above his head. "I had a fracas last night with one of those Frenchmen too, only I didn't have to use a piano stool. I just lammed him good with my right hand. Say, but you did lay old Salmon Jack out for fair. Did you notice how wobbly he was when they took him into the lockup last night? And did you see that long lanky fellow? Some one treated him mighty rough. He had two dandy shiners. I suppose they'll all be brought before the Justice of the Peace to-day. If it wasn't that Mr. Warner and the rest might be worrying over us, I'd like to stay."

"I wonder what they'll do with 'em?" said Jack, crossing the room to the little old-fashioned mirror on the wall and smoothing his rumpled hair with a white comb he had found on the highboy in the corner.



“Why, Mr. Williams said that they would probably be taken to the County Seat and kept there until the County Court meets next month. Then they will likely be sent to jail for three or four years or even longer. I guess they’re a bad lot and the warden’s glad to get ’em under lock and key.”

“Well, come on. Let’s get downstairs. I’m nearly famished, and besides Old Mitchell will be waiting for us. I suppose he’s wondering now whether we’re going to sleep all day or not. The mist seems to have thinned out a little, but the sky looks mighty lowery, doesn’t it?” said Jack.

“Yes, I guess we’re in for a spell o’ weather,” answered his companion.

Ray’s sense of smell had not deceived him. There were clams for breakfast, great stacks of them, and hot biscuits and a pitcher of honey and still another of cream. And there were doughnuts, too, and coffee, and best of all the smiling face of Mrs. Williams and the genial countenance of the warden himself. He was already seated at the table, a big napkin tucked under his double chin, and Mrs. Williams, who was as tiny as her husband was ponderous,



was heaping his plate with freshly fried clams.

"Good morning, boys," she said with a smile, but before they could reply, the warden's deep voice boomed out:

"Well, well, what do you fellers think this place is, one o' those city houses that don't wake up until nine o'clock? Jingonetties, why didn't you sleep all day?"

"There, there, Will, don't scold them. Poor lads, they're tired. Here sit down in this comfortable chair. I'll bring you some hot clams right away," said Mrs. Williams, who was fond of pretending that her husband's assumed gruffness frightened her when it really did not at all.

Those clams were truly wonderful. They fairly melted in Jack's mouth and the honey and cream was the best he had ever tasted. Indeed, Jack could scarcely remember ever having enjoyed a breakfast quite so thoroughly as he did the one arranged by Mrs. Williams. And as for Ray, well, he said absolutely nothing at all, but the way he devoured the savory brown morsels that the good lady set before him was quite the best compliment he could have offered her. The boys had the appetites



of young sharks, and since Mr. Williams was as busy as they at the same occupation, there was very little conversation. But the unfortunate part of a good meal is that one finally reaches the point where he can eat no more. Jack and Ray reached this period disappointingly soon. They were forced to suspend activities for sheer lack of room.

"Oh, what a good breakfast," said Ray, with a sigh as he wiped his mouth on his napkin. "Shucks, I'm sorry I can't stow away any more."

"So am I," assured Jack as he let his belt out another hole.

"Well, now that you've got a full cargo, how about goin' over to the lock-up and havin' a look at our friends of last night?" asked Mr. Williams, finding his hat and coat.

"Well, no, I'm afraid we can't, though we'd like to very much. You see, we've been away from Hood Island a day and a night and goodness knows what Mr. Warner thinks has happened to us. Then, besides, Old Mitchell is probably waiting for us. I think we'd better go right down to the wharf," said Jack.

"I'd rather get aboard the *Betsy Anne*. I



think I'd feel better," said Ray, and his words seemed to have a peculiar meaning.

"Well, all right, boys, go long. I'll be over to Hood Island to see you before the Summer's over," said the warden as he shook hands and hurried out.

Jack and Ray lingered long enough to say good-by to Mrs. Williams and thank the little woman for her kindness. Then they fared forth into the old-fashioned street in which Mr. Williams lived. The residential section of the Pool was up a gentle slope from the bay and some distance from the business section where the fish markets and stalls were located.

This quarter of the community was quaintly aristocratic in appearance. The streets were lined with elms guarded by squared tree boxes and the houses were all surrounded by little lawns and flower gardens. In truth, the whole section had an atmosphere of the early Sixties, a fact which Jack remarked as the boys walked toward the waterfront.

But soon they passed on into the busy part of the town where merchants and fishermen were dickering and bargaining over the morning's catch and where women with baskets on their



arms were marketing and shippers were trading for their daily consignments for Boston or New York.

The little community seemed to Jack to be very lively and wide awake for a place of its size and he watched with eager interest the crowds of men who tramped up and down the narrow streets, their big sea boots making a tremendous thumping noise on the board sidewalks.

And presently as he was watching, there moved into his line of vision on the opposite side of the thoroughfare a ponderous man who was clad in a pea jacket, blue cap and heavy boots. His face was dark and weather-beaten and he wore a black beard which helped to give him a very stern appearance. Jack knew that he had seen him before and he groped about in his mind for a name to fit his countenance.

"Who is he?" he mused. "Where did I see him before? Where—"

"Say, Ray," he said aloud, "who is that big man with a beard over there? See he's looking this way now—why—why— What's the matter, Ray?"



Ray had looked, at Jack's request, and the moment he set eyes upon the big man his face paled and he became thoroughly frightened.

"Jack, that's Uncle Vance," he said in a husky whisper. "I wonder if he saw us. I was almost certain that was his yawl that nearly ran us down last night. That's what I was worrying about this morning. Come on, let's— Oh, Jack, he's recognized me! Here he comes! Run! Run! Please run!"

Jack gave one glance across the street again and saw the bearded giant headed for them at top speed and the look on his face was enough to make the boys run, whether they wanted to or not. Like a flash Jack turned, but Ray had already bolted and was twenty feet away and running like the wind. Up the center of the crowded street went the chase, Ray in the lead and Jack right at his heels, with the big man in full cry not thirty feet behind.

Ray dodged into the first cross street he came to and this being comparatively free of pedestrians he let out a burst of speed that astonished the young Vermonter, who was no slow runner himself. The lad from Drueryville had hard



work to keep up with his chum, and as he raced along at Ray's heels he could not help but picture how Ray would look in moleskins with a football tucked under one arm, going across a gridiron at such a pace.

But he had no time to conjure up such pictures, for presently Ray dodged around another corner into a street that ran parallel to the main street and led toward the wharves. Jack risked a glance backward at this point and saw that while they had not shaken the uncle off their tracks they were outdistancing him fast.

"Hit it up faster and dodge once more, Ray, and we'll shake him," he panted to the young swordfisherman. And hit it up Ray did until Jack's legs fairly ached with the pace. Down to the docks ran the boys, upsetting a clam digger with a basket on his head, and leaving chaos and a crowd of angry looking natives in their wake.

But in a moment the lads reached the long dock at the end of which the *Betsy Anne* was moored. At a distance they could see Old Mitchell standing on the very end of the wharf, looking in their direction. And when he saw



the boys racing down the pier at full speed his eyes grew round with wonder.

Ray could not stop to explain, however:

“Quick, Mitchell, quick! Get us aboard the *Betsy Anne* and get her out among the fishing boats so he can’t find us. Oh, please, please hurry.”

“’Urry, is hit? ’Urry, wit blow me, hif I thought you lads wuz hin a ’urry, seeings ’ow I been a-waitin’ fer a ’our.”

“Yes, yes, but we *are* in a hurry,” insisted Jack as he followed Ray down the ladder and into the cockpit of the *Betsy Anne*.

“So are I,” said Mitchell, and after casting off the mooring he scrambled down on one foot. “So are I, fer I likes t’ go hout on t’ tide, I does.”

Just where or when Ray’s uncle had given up the chase the boys could not tell, but in spite of the wide trail of angry men and women, and overturned carts the boys had left along the water front, Vance Carroll had evidently lost them. Leastwise, he did not put in his appearance upon the long dock while the *Betsy Anne* was getting under way, for which Ray and Jack were truly thankful.



In ten minutes the little sloop, with Captain Eli's green dory still trailing on behind, was scudding out toward the open sea, dodging through the fleet of fishing boats and walking away from every craft that tried to keep pace with her. And when the boys had finally regained their breath and were a little more at ease, they related to the old lobsterman their triumph in shaking the man whom Ray feared so much.

But this triumph was short-lived, for even while they were telling their story Ray paused and shaded his eyes with his hands; for back there, far across the harbor, he had caught sight of the swordfisherman's yawl.

"Mr. Mitchell, have you got a glass? There's his boat over yonder and I do believe they're making sail on her. Say, do you suppose he's found out that we are on the *Betsy Anne* and is getting ready to chase us? If he is, we're lost, for the *Fish Hawk* can overhaul anything that carries sail, seems to me."

"Huh, don't be s' sure o' that, me 'arty," said Old Mitchell indignantly. "T' *Betsy Hanne* kin shake a leg 'erself. Which be t'



yawl ye want t' know about. That one ower there; way, way ower 'bout a mile?"

"Yes, that's it, over there in a line with that church steeple on shore. She's—"

"Blow me hif she ain't makin' sail," exclaimed Mitchell.

"Good night, Jack!" said Ray with a startled look. "Then it's all up with me."

"Hup, say ye, hall hup. Huh, blime 'e hif t' hole *Betsy Hanne* can't make 'Ood Hisland afore that air wessel, seein' a 'ow we got a mile start wi' them, blime 'e I'll sink 'er, that's what I'll do."

"Can you beat her, Mr. Mitchell? Can you?" asked Ray almost tearfully, putting his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"I'll go fer t' show 'e hif ye want me to," said the lobsterman as he spat over the side.

"Well, goodness help me if you don't," said Ray, "for if Uncle Vance ever gets his hands on me again he'll certainly make me pay for running away."

"Why now, 'ow's this? T'is yer uncle ye're a-runnin' awi' from?" queried Mitchell, as he shifted the tiller and took in about a foot of



the sheet, to make the mainsail draw better.

"Yes, that's who he is," said Ray bitterly. "He's my uncle and a fine uncle he's been to me. Thrashed the life out of me as long as I've known him and made things generally miserable for me. Aw—hang it, I get so unhappy thinking about the way he treated me that I could almost be a baby over it, I guess," said Ray, swallowing hard.

"Tut, tut, don't take hit s'ard, me lad; ye dont' need t' talk habout hit hif 'e don't want t'," said the kind-hearted old lobsterman as he cast a watchful eye aloft to see that there were no wrinkles in the peak.

"I'm mighty glad I ran away from him," said Ray, "though sometimes I worry over whether I did right or not. You see, he's my only relative and I've cut loose from him entirely. Folks says that when a lad shifts around without any grown folks to lean upon he's liable to become a 'good-for-nothing,' as my uncle says. Yet, for all, I've been a heap more comfortable since I ran away from him," he concluded doggedly.

"Ow came 'e fer t' git on 'Ood Hisland?" queried Mitchell.



"Why, I jumped overboard and swam ashore," said Ray.

"And it was some swim," supplemented Jack enthusiastically.

"Han' ye crossed 'e's bow t' day over in Haustin's Pool?" queried Mitchell, looking astern.

"Yes, and we had to run like the dickens to shake him. Is his boat anywhere in sight—Gee, he's following us all right? That's his sail, way back there. Oh, Mr. Mitchell, please get us to the island first. I can't go back with him. I can't."

"Tut, tut, lad, we've a flyin' start hon 'im, an' hif we don't out-run 'im, big as 'e is, wi—wi—well, we'll do hit. An' as fer you bein' aferd o' turnin' hout a 'good-for-nothin' es you say, wi' I think as 'ow 'e might o' become one o' them air things hif ye'd stayed wi 'im. Floggins an' rope hend ain't good hif a feller gits 'em too hoften. Why, lads, look o' me. I ain't a 'good-fer-nothin',' no more are I a lofer er a lobster pirut er a bloomin' sea lawyer, an' I ain't 'ad no re-relatives t' lean hupon since I was passin' ten."

"Tell us about yourself," said Jack, who had



always been curious to know the old seaman's past.

"Why, now they ain't much t' tell," said the lobsterman, after his usual preliminary of spitting over the rail. "They ain't much t' tell, seein' as 'ow when I was but knee 'igh t' a water butt me daddy was lost wi' a hull trawl-in' crew hin t' North Sea. Then I became an horphant an' wi'hout one relative, seein' as 'ow me mother 'ad died when I was a toddler.

"The folks as I was livin' wi' didn't hexpect no more board money fer me as was paid by me daddy when 'e was alivin' an' they jest turned me hout t' a free farm which ain't no com'f'-table place fer a yonker.

"Seein' as 'ow things was as they was I hups an' runs awi, sterin' a course fer Lonnon. But on me wi I finds an' hole salt, naime o' Jem Banks, an' 'e bein' a 'arty hole salt as is hin t' sarvice, 'e takes a likin' o' me an' says, says 'e, "'Ere, lad, they're a needin' of a cabin-boy aboard t' *Bull'ark*. Why don't 'e come along o' me an' sign pipers?"

"'Aye, 'aye,' says I, bein' by natcher a sailor. This 'ere tickles Jem Banks an' 'e tikes me along



of 'im an' next thing 'ere I are cabin boy aboard the H.M.S. *Bull'ark*."

"How long did you stay in the navy?" asked Ray.

"Till I gits t' be a real A.B. When I'm a lad habout twenty I tikes hit hin me 'ead t' try an adventure 'er two, so seein' as 'ow I'd served me time I hups an' leaves an' ships aboard t' *Jenney Lee*, what is a ship as is runnin' hof t' blockade hin Caroliney durin' t' Civil War. But we ain't run 'em more'n twict when sinked we are be t' U.S.S. *New 'Ampshire* an' hin t' fracas me laig's shot hoff.

"Well, now, they ain't much more to tell, exceptin' as 'ow I was taken pris'ner o' war an' such like an' nigh got 'ung fer me bein' a blockade runner, hafter I comes hout of the 'orspital wi' me timber laig. Hafter t' war I gets hup north 'ere 'mongst t' fishermen, an' drifted from one thing to t'other till 'ere I are 'igh an' dry hon 'Ood Hisland, makin' of a fair livin' wi' me lobster pots, where I been t' last twenty years."

"You certainly have had an interesting time of it," said Jack enthusiastically.



"I guess he has," added Ray. "I wonder how I'll come out without my uncle or any one to— By George, I plum forgot we were running away from him. Look, look, he's picked up a lot. Oh, Mr. Mitchell, can we make the island ahead of him?"

In truth, all three had forgotten the chase for the time and in the meanwhile the yawl had been gaining at every mile.

"Blow me, hif I didn't fergit haubot hit, too. My heye, but 'e's got a sailboat fer 'e an' a sailor at 'er wheel too. Come, shake a leg, *Betsy Hanne*. There's t' hisland ower there. Bout four miles t' go. Ye gotta 'op along, me *Betsy*. An' hit's startin' t' rain an' blow a little, hin t' bargain."

From then on the boys were too much worried about the swiftly flying yawl to think of conversation. Ray's uncle had every inch of canvas set and the swift swordfisherman was plowing through the water at top speed. But the *Betsy Anne* was making time, too. With the wind off her port quarter and all sails set, she was heeling low and making the water boil under her sharp little bow. On and on she



raced, dashing spray over her crew as she cut her way through the big seas that were being kicked up by the ever freshening wind.

But in spite of the little boat's good time, Old Mitchell was plainly worried over the outcome of the race.

"Look 'ere, lads, even hif we do beat 'im to t' hisland, 'ow are I t' prewent yer uncle from comin' 'longside an' shanghain' o' ye hoff aboard e's own wessel what is such a nifty sailin' one?"

"Why—why—that's right," said Ray helplessly.

"Do the same as you did before, Ray," said Jack. "I mean, let Mr. Mitchell run the *Betsy Anne* along the outside of the reef to the opening and then slip through. He won't dare follow you then."

"That's right. Can you put the *Betsy Anne* through that opening in Cobra Reef? You know the place I mean. About half way up to the lighthouse."

"I put 'er through every time I pays a call hon Cap'n Eli, which I admits ain't been often o' late," said the lobsterman.

"Good, then beat him to it and put her



through this time. He'll never follow us 'cause he don't know the channel and he'll never land on that end of the island again, not after the lamming he got from Big O'Brien, will he, Jack?"

"No, siree," said Jack.

"Aye, aye, sir, through t' reef she goes," said Mitchell.

All attention was settled on the chase after that. The yawl had cut the distance between the two vessels down to half a mile and Hood Island was still two miles off. On sped the boats, the yawl breasting the waves in fine fashion and heeling over to what seemed a perilous angle.

"He keeps canvas on the *Fish Hawk*," said Ray. "Wind's fresh enough to stand a reef. Don't you think so, Mr. Mitchell?"

"'E kin take a reef hif 'e want, but not fer t' *Betsy Hanne*," said the old mariner. "My boat kin stand weather, she can."

Indeed, the *Betsy Anne* proved that she could, for her big mainsail was as tight as a drum and her jib as full. She was cutting the water like a knife and eating up the distance toward the island.



Now they were abreast of the lower end and a mile off shore. The yawl was sliding down on the same tack but still a half mile off the *Betsy's* starboard quarter.

"Neck and neck," cried the skipper of the little craft. "Neck an' neck wi' a mile t' run before we strikes t' reef. Hit's a close race, me 'arties, for 'e's comin' fast."

"Oh, make it please! We must! We must!" said Ray nervously as he looked toward his uncle's boat.

"Aye, aye, sir," said the lobsterman and the next moment the *Betsy Anne* came about and started on the last reach toward the reef.

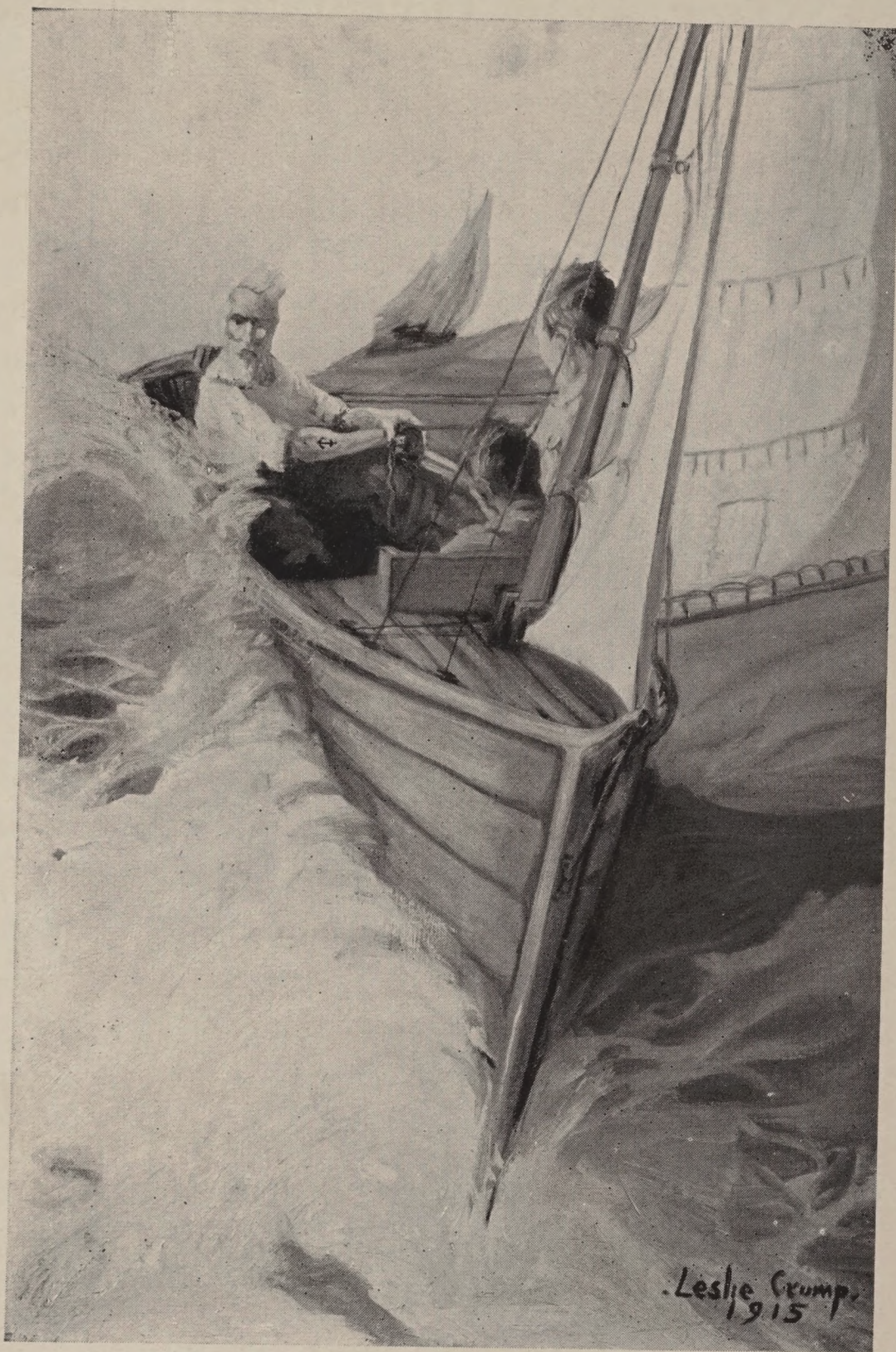
The *Fish Hawk* came about a moment later and much to the chagrin of the boys she seemed but half the distance behind.

"Jiminy, look at that boat come," cried Jack, now thoroughly excited.

"I should say she is coming," said Ray, "and by gracious if she can beat us out on this stretch she can cut across our bow and head us off from the opening in the reef for she'll be on our port side. Oh, make it, Mr. Mitchell, make it, for goodness' sakes."

But Mitchell was all attention on the race





“Hit’s a close race, me ’arties, for ’e’s comin’ fast.”







just then and did not even look at the lads. With cool calculating eye he measured the distance between his boat and the yawl and the distance to the reef. For fully five minutes he was as silent as a stone image, then he said triumphantly:

“Hif we keep hit up, boys, we’ll crowd ’im hin s’close to t’ reef that ’e’ll be huncom’f’table. Then ’e’ll ’ave t’ come about and run astern o’ us, which will lose ’im a ’undred yards; either that er ’e’ll ’ave t’ run hus down, which ’e won’t do fer fear o’ stovin’ hup ’es own boat. We got ’im, lads, cause ’e won’t run werry close hin fer t’ water’s bilin’ hup on t’ rocks. Watch now. We’re edgin’ closer. See ’im, ’es narvous! See ’im! See ’im now! Ain’t ’e figity! ’E gettin’ hin clost! ’As ’e got ’es nerve wi’ ’im? Nope—’o—’o—I knew hit—’ere ’e comes about an’ on we goes a ’undred yards further. Hoorah!”

True to the old man’s calculations, the little boat crowded the big boat out of the inside course. Ray’s uncle was afraid to venture as close to the ugly water as Mitchell sailed his boat and he was forced to come about and head across the wake of the *Betsy Anne*. But the



lobsterman's craft kept dead on for five minutes longer and the yawl sheered off to keep from running her down.

"Out-sailed, by George, out-sailed! I'll bet Uncle Vance is so mad he would sink us if he had to do it over again," screamed Ray in delight. The two boats had crossed so close to each other that he could see the bearded figure of his uncle at the wheel. Indeed, the old tyrant shook his fist at the lad and Ray grinned in return.

The run up along the reef was made with the *Betsy Anne* on the inside and the *Fish Hawk* two hundred yards off the starboard quarter. But the swordfisherman could see that the race was lost and he was only keeping abreast while he thought of a new plan of action. But even while he was thinking it over the sloop came even with the break between the rocks and although the water raced through the opening at express speed and lashed the boulders on either side, Old Mitchell jammed down the helm, hauled in on his sheet and with a swish of canvas and the creaking of blocks, the *Betsy Anne* came about and slipped through and into the comparatively smooth water inside.



“Talk about a sailor!” cried Ray, as Mitchell headed the *Betsy Anne* north again toward the little beach. “Talk about a sailor! Why, there isn’t a man along the Maine coast who could have done it prettier, Mr. Mitchell.”

“Tut, tut, hit hall comes o’ my known t’ wies o’ me *Betsy Hanne*, me boy,” said the lobsterman, but he was plainly pleased with the compliment.

A few minutes later the little sloop came to anchor and the crew of three rowed to the beach in Captain Eli’s dory. And as the trio stepped ashore, Ray turned and gazed at the disappearing *Fish Hawk*.

“Well, we beat you, Uncle Vance, and I hope I’ll never see your old boat again,” he said.

But he little knew under what circumstances he would see his uncle’s vessel once more.



## CHAPTER XI

### RAY'S FIND

FOR some time following their adventure with Warden Williams' lobster patrol and their subsequent chase by the *Fish Hawk*, Ray and Jack were kept rather busy about the construction camp, for the lighthouse builders were working at full speed and taking advantage of the excellent August weather. Mr. Warner was staying awake all hours of the night, working out construction problems in his little office, and of course the two lads had to keep his place in order and do a great deal of checking up after these sessions of activity.

They paid daily visits to Cobra Head, also, to watch the progress of the work there, and during each of their visits they learned something new about the problems of erecting a sea-swept lighthouse. In spite of the excellent weather that the workmen had been blessed with, it seemed to the two lads that they were



making unusually slow progress. In truth, though they had been laboring a little more than six weeks there were but four courses of stone laid. Jack remarked about this to Mr. Warner on one occasion when the engineer had accompanied the boys to the rocks.

"Huh," said Mr. Warner, "if you think that is slow just look up the construction records made on other lighthouses and you will understand what slow work is. We've been particularly fortunate here in being so well above the water. Why, there are some jobs where the tide and waves will only allow the men to work a few hours every month, and then they have to accomplish their task with one hand on a life-line, so to speak.

"Look at the conditions that the workmen were forced to contend with while building Minot's Ledge light, for instance. The old rock was but three feet out of water at the best tide and the engineers had to build a steel structure over the ledge and attach life-lines to it and station a lookout to watch for big waves. When the lookout saw a large one coming which he knew would curl over the rock he shouted a warning and every man



grabbed his life-line and threw himself flat upon the rock to keep from being washed overboard. They always worked in wet clothes and they were mighty lucky to have whole legs and arms after a wave had passed. Why, they didn't get in but 130 hours' work the first year and it took five whole years to build the beacon."

"Jiminy, that must have been some job," said Jack.

"You bet it was," assured Mr. Warner. "Why, they had to think of all sorts of tricks to keep old Neptune from beating them. When they were building the foundation on the ledge, they had to bring bags of sand out and construct veritable cofferdams about the spot that had been pared down to hold a building block. Then every time they put cement onto a block to hold the next one in place they had to put cheese cloth over the cement to keep stray waves from sneaking up and licking the block clear before the new block could be put in place."

"Did they take the cheese cloth off before they put the next stone in position?" asked Ray.



"No, they let it stay. The cement oozed through the mesh of the cloth and gripped the block just the same," said Mr. Warner.

"Hum, that's a queer wrinkle," said Jack.

"Well, we may do some of that work here the early part of the Fall when the tides run unusually high and the seas get to curling up on us. Yes, we're mighty lucky in having the top of the Head so high above water. Also we have been fortunate so far as weather conditions are concerned. Goodness knows some lighthouse builders have had to fight storms almost all the time. Look at the crew that undertook to build the famous Tillemook light under Ballantyne. They fought the weather incessantly, and they even stuck to the rock during a blow that developed into a real tornado which smashed and carried away the storehouse in which their provisions were kept. It was several weeks before more provisions could be brought to them, and in the meantime all they had left was some hard bread and coffee and a little bacon. Those are conditions to work under, lads. Why, this is like dallying in the lap of luxury compared with Tillemook, Minot's Ledge, Eddystone and the rest of the



difficult marine engineering stunts that have been undertaken."

"Lighthouses have to be mighty strong structures, don't they?" said Ray, who had been examining the way the heavy stones were interlocked, cemented, and then double fastened with iron "dogs."

"Strong? I should say so," assured the engineer. "Why, some of them have to stand wind and waves that tear solid stone to pieces. I remember hearing once of a light over in England, or Ireland, rather, on the Fastnet Rock, the first light steamships sight on their way to England. In a storm a big section of the rock itself, three tons or more it weighed, was torn loose, but before it could fall into the sea, a second wave seized it and hurled it into the air squarely against the lighthouse tower on the top of the rock."

"Did the tower stand up under that?" exclaimed Jack in wide-eyed amazement.

"Yes, it did, and many another beating almost as bad. Why, they say that storms are so heavy over there that the tower trembles and sways under the force of wind and water. Cups have been jarred from the table to the



floor, glasses knocked down and broken, and many other disagreeable things have happened. Yet the tower stood up under it all and still stands, although there has been a new tower erected since. I think that one of the famous Stevensons had something to do with it."

"Stevensons?" said Jack. "Oh, I've heard of them. They were related to the author, Robert Louis Stevenson, weren't they?"

"Yes," said Mr. Warner, "the author of *Treasure Island* came from a family of renowned lighthouse builders. There are many lights along the Scottish and English coast that stand as monuments to the skill of the author's kinsmen. Among them are the Chicken Rock light on the Isle of Man and Skerryvore."

"Tell us, Mr. Warner, have many lights been swept away into the sea by storms?" asked Jack, as he and Ray started to climb into the little cable-car that carried them over the aerial railway back to shore.

"Indeed, there have been many. Some have been swept away so completely that only a twisted steel bar or two remained to tell that a light once marked the spot. And always the keepers disappear with them for they are too



brave to desert their posts even in the face of death. Take the fate of the keepers of the Grand Manan, which was located not so very far north of here. The light and men disappeared in a storm and never were heard of again. The first Minot's Ledge light in Boston harbor went the same way and with it went the keepers too. Oh, yes, many a brave man has gone to his death in the Lighthouse Service."

Such little talks as these with the engineer and the workmen added interest to the boys' life on the island and the days passed as if on wings. Captain Eli, the lighthouse keeper, also told them tales of the service and the lads spent many an hour in his company while he was on watch in the tower or off duty in his little cottage. Taking it all in all the boys were having quite a delightful time, and if it had not been for Ray's periodical "blues" (as Jack called them) over his inability to fit another model of his non-sinkable lifeboat together, neither lad would have had a single thing to complain about.

As August wore on Ray's blue spells occurred more often, however, for he realized



that in a few weeks or a month at best Jack would be leaving Hood Island to return to school, while he—well, he didn't know exactly what he would do. From all appearances there would be no school for him, as much as he wanted to attend. Indeed, sometimes he grew quite beside himself with his unhappiness and it was all that Jack could do to change his frame of mind.

His lonesomeness was emphasized frequently too when a lighthouse tender put in at the island to bring additional supplies and any mail that was meant for the working men. On every visit of the mail steamer Jack was almost certain to have from two to a dozen letters from his father and schoolboy friends who were scattered over the country during the vacation period. But the pleasure of receiving letters was denied Ray simply because he had no friends and relatives in the outside world to communicate with him.

Aside from the visits of the lighthouse tender no vessels touched at the island at all. The lads, almost daily, saw the trails of black smoke above the horizon, left by transatlantic steamers traveling the water lanes across the



ocean, but usually these craft were hull down by the time they reached Hood Island. Fishing vessels bound for the banks were occasionally sighted also, and once in a while a stray swordfishing schooner or yawl would hover about the island for several hours in search of their elusive prey.

Once or twice the lads also sighted the trim little *Betsy Anne*, Mitchell's boat, dancing on the waves far outside the reef. Since their adventurous two days with the timber-legged lobsterman the lads had always intended walking across the island and locating his house, but nearly two weeks passed before they could find time to pay him a visit.

And strangely enough, on the very day they had planned to cross the island (they had cleared up all their work and Mr. Warner had given them time off), the *Betsy Anne* came scudding up inside the reef, towing a dory. The small boat was piled high with lobster traps as was the cockpit of the little sloop, and the boys wondered what the old seaman was about.

From the edge of the cliff they hailed him while he was yet some distance off. And when



he saw them standing there he hallooed back, and then quite suddenly brought the *Betsy Anne* up into the wind and waved to them to come down to the beach.

When the boys had made their way down the winding path from the promontory to the sandy strip, the old lobsterman was waiting for them, having rowed ashore in his seemingly overloaded dory.

"Why, blime me; blime me and blow me, say I, where about are you younkers been a-keeping of yersel's? Blow me an' sink me, hif 'e ain't t' most onsociablest coves as ever was. Why'n't 'e ever come fer t' see Hole Mitch, I axe ye?"

"Why—well—you see—the truth is we were going to walk across the island some time to-day—truly we were—don't grin like that as if you doubted us."

"I ain't given' for t' doubt 'e, I ain't. But seein' as 'ow I spends most o' my days an' considerable o' my nights a-tryin' fer t' make a livin' I ain't t' 'ome much. Like es not ye'd never been findin' o' me 'ome hif ye 'ad a-come 'crost. I'm hup at four, I are, and hout hin me hole *Betsy Anne* a-tendin' o' my traps 'till hits too dark fer t' see."



"What are you doing up at this end of the island? I never saw you come up this way before," said Jack.

"Right an' so, right an' so. Never does I come hup 'ere fer t' fish, me bein' given t' string my traps hout to t' sow'east'ard. But lobsterin' been s' poor hin my usu'l wisinity that I guesst I'd try hout a score o' traps to t' nor'west'ard, seein' as 'ow t' bottom's likely hout there. I'm goin' fer t' try hout these 'ere traps. That's where I'm bound. Want t' ship hon this 'ere cruiss', lads?"

"Do we? You bet we do. But—but, will that dory hold all of us? She's loaded down now," said Jack.

"Tut, tut, them traps is light. Come along, we'll make a day of hit, er we'll make as much o' a day of hit as t' weather 'll let us, fer she's goin' t' blow some this a'ternoon," said Old Mitchell, making a place for the lads in the dory.

Presently the boys tumbled aboard the *Betsy Anne* and a few minutes later they were under way. Up along the island coast they sped, the tumultuous currents that slipped between the reef and the land making the little



sloop dance and yaw in surprising manner. As they sped past the promontory and plunged tossing and pitching through the line of breakers that marked the joining of the mill race of water with the ocean just off the point of the high promontory, Jack and Ray hallooed as loud as they could to the workmen on Cobra Head and waved a passing salute. Mr. Warner was on the rock and when he saw the lobsterman's sloop go dancing by he took off his hat and waved a farewell to them.

Beyond the breaker line were the long rolling ground swells of the broad Atlantic, over which the little craft scudded swiftly. Out, out, oceanward they raced, the boys thoroughly enjoying the sail. For two miles to the northwest Old Mitchell kept a straight course and watched the water with critical eye. Finally, after he had prefaced his remarks by spitting over the side, he said:

"Well, 'ere's es good a place es any fer t' try a trap. 'Ow say 'e t' puttin' one ower t' side?" Then heading the sloop into the wind he examined one of the traps in the stern of the *Betsy Anne*, and after seeing that the little mesh bag inside the slat-like prison was well



baited with dead fish he shoved it overboard. Two stones in the trap caused it to sink immediately and the lobsterman played out the warping line until he reached the point where a big stone jug was fastened. He examined the stopper in the jug to see that it was airtight, then tossed this over too, and a little later the black and white buoy, to which the end of the line was fastened. This floated away from the sloop, bobbing and dancing in a fascinating manner.

"There," said Mitchell, "I 'opes as 'ow when I comes t' see 'e t-morrer er t' next day ye'll 'ave a 'alf dozen o' t' biggest lobsters es ever was."

"We hope the same," said Ray with a grin.

"Thank 'e, lad, thank 'e," said Mitchell. Then he added, "'Eavens knows I need 'em. This 'ere is t' sheddin' season and hits t' blindest time o' year ever fer hus lobster coves."

"Shedding season?" said Jack. "Do lobsters shed their shells too? I thought only crabs did."

"They're t' sheddineest fish as ever was," said the lobsterman. "I've 'ad 'em shed over night on me. Put a lot o' big uns in t' lobster car



one day an' when I comes t' wisit 'em t' next day there's 'alf o' 'em just crawled hout o' their shells. An' they ain't no good arter they're shed neither. Just es soft es putty."

"That's mighty interesting," said Jack. "Tell us something about lobsters, will you, Mr. Mitchell? How do they live? How fast do they grow? What do they—?"

"Tut, tut, not s' fast, lad," said Mitchell, holding up his hand. "Lobsters is pecooliar fish, seein' 'as 'ow their chise allus runs t' livin on rock bottom. Ye'll never find a lobster as is livin' hin water wi' a sand bottom. They eats most heverythin' too; that is heverythin' what's dead. Mostly they eats dead fish, an' t' best bait fer 'em is flounders. That's what I baits my traps wi'. They're 'eathens too; jest reg'lar cannibuls. I'm meanin', by that, hif I puts three or four lobsters as ain't got a little wooden plug stuck hin their nippers, hin my car together, why the next mornin' I finds that they've chawed each other up in fine shape. Bite each other t' pieces jest like cannibuls does.

"As fer growin', why, lobsters grows habout a hinch er a hinch an' a 'alf a year. When they sheds as 'ow I tol ye, why then t' new



shell as grows on 'em is habout a hinch too big for 'em; like a pair o' daddy's pants as is on a younker. Durin' t' year their body grows an' fills hup t' hinch o' space, an' next Summer they're ready fer t' shed and grow another hinch.

"When a lobster sheds 'e goes an' crawls down hin t' kelp an' lives there 'till 'es shell grows hon agin. If 'e didn't 'e'd get et hup by fishes as is lookin' fer soft lobsters. In Maine 'ere we can't take no lobsters what ain't grewed ten hitches long. Them's called 'counters.' Nine hinch lobsters, what is sold in N'York and Bosting is called 'Nippers' and lobsters less 'en nine hitches is called just plain 'bugs.' An' hif a Maine cove as catches lobsters 'as heny bugs hin 'es lobster car when Warden Williams come 'round 'e's liable fer t' get fined a dollar fer every one o' 'em as is there."

"Jiminy, is that so?" exclaimed Jack, who had been listening eagerly to all Mitchell had said. "How big do some lobsters grow?"

"Well, lad, an huncommon lobster is one as is seven or height pound, though I did see one



as weighted twenty-seven pounds down Portland wi' last time I went there. But when we gets a three or four pound lobster 'ere we don't raise no 'oller habout bein' cheated," said the old salt dryly.

"I think I remember reading somewhere about how, when a lobster loses a leg or a claw a new one begins to grow on immediately. Is that so?" asked Jack.

"Right an' so lad, right an' so. I've ketched 'em as 'ad one claw which is a big one and t'other which ain't 'alf as big, en I've seen big lobsters wi' a couple of little small legs as looks ri-dic'lus, too."

"The Winter season is the best, isn't it, Mr. Mitchell?" said Ray.

"T' best for ketchen 'em, but hit ain't t' best weather t' be hout a-hauling hof t' traps. Why, lads, sometimes hits been s' cold as me nippers ud freeze fast t' me 'ands and many's t' time I've 'ad t' hang me whiskers ower t' back o' a chair near the fireplace when I got 'ome so's t' git t' hice outen 'em."

The mental picture of the old lobsterman sitting with his beard hanging over the back of the chair tickled the lads, and they roared



with laughter, much to the amusement of the one-legged fisherman.

“Lobstering is mighty good sport though,” said Ray. “I’ve been out with the fellows down Ascog way and had a heap of fun. The lobstermen down that way are bad ones though, and they are constantly getting into trouble with one another. They have regular feuds sometimes; the French Canadians and the Yankees. I remember Uncle Vance telling a story once of how one fellow planted a half dozen lobster traps near an island and then hid behind a rock until he saw one of his rivals, a French Canadian, haul one of his traps. He blazed away at him from shore with a rifle he’d taken out there, and the Frenchman shot back with a revolver. They had a hot time until the Frenchman got hit in the knee.”

“Them ’air Cannucks is t’ natchralest lobster piruts as ever was,” said Mitchell with emphasis.

Thus did the crew of the *Betsy Anne* chat as they sailed here and there in the water north of Hood Island while Old Mitchell dropped his twenty-odd lobster traps overboard. The lobsterman explained, as he finished this task,



that these were merely by way of trying out the new location, and that if it proved a good fishing ground he would shift a hundred or more traps north of the island. This amount he said was about one-third of the total number he owned. He also assured the lads that three hundred lobster traps were about as many as one could handle conveniently and that some lobstermen limited their string to half that number.

By high noon the old sailor had deposited all of his traps and was headed back toward the island. Past the northern end they sailed and down the west coast. In the lee of the island the ocean was a great deal calmer, for the mighty currents that swept the other side did not reach them. The shore did not seem as rocky either, and sandy beaches were quite numerous.

When they reached the extreme southern end the lads saw a large cove, and on the shore, above a short sandy beach, the neatest little cottage they had ever set eyes upon.

"Wow," said Jack, "what a corking little place. That must be your home, Mr. Mitchell."



"Right an' so, right an' so. 'Tis t' place I built me when I first came 'ere nigh onto twenty years ago. But we won't stop now, lads, even though 'tis dinner time. Ye see I been heyein' hof them air clouds off hin t' nor'east there. Hits a settin' fer t' blow, an' I want t' git some bait afore t' waves git s' 'igh es t' make hit on'com'ft'bul fer t' fish outen t' hole *Betsy Hanne*. I'm goin' hoff that air strip o' sand there where t' flounders 'angs hout. Flounders is fish as likes t' nose 'round hin t' mud fer their food an' they honly lives hon sandy bottoms. You, lads, kin 'andle a line er two fer me, can't 'e? Then, arter we get hour bait we'll go 'ome an' git somethin' t' eat. 'Ow's that strike 'e?"

"Fine," said Ray.

"I'll be ready for the eats," assured Jack.

For an hour the three in the *Betsy Anne* fished diligently. Each one handled two lines and was kept busy, for the flounders bit ravenously. But the fish were all small and it took a great many of them to fill the big box that Mitchell used to hold his trap bait. And in the meantime great gray storm clouds were gathering in the northeast and the wind was



becoming higher every minute. The long rolling swell changed to choppy seas that made the little sloop dance about like a cockleshell, and the lads had difficulty in attending to their lines and maintaining their places in the boat at the same time.

Finally Old Mitchell announced that the seas were running a little too high for comfort, and since the bait box was nearly full he thought it best to up anchor and set sail for the cove where his cottage was located. This suggestion pleased both Jack and Ray for, to tell the truth, the bucking of the boat was getting really uncomfortable. Mitchell put his main sail up with a reef in it, which Ray helped him tie, and without a jib ran for the shelter of the little harbor in front of the cottage.

Inside the cove the wind seemed less fierce and the water less violent, and in a few moments the *Betsy Anne* reached the square mooring buoy to which she was fastened. It took but a few moments to make the little craft snug in her berth with her sails furled, and after this operation Mitchell and the lads rowed ashore in the dory.

Although the wind was blowing hard and



rain occasionally spattered down, the lads found time to pause and admire the cottage and its surroundings before accepting Mitchell's invitation to enter.

The old mariner had spent a great deal of time and labor about the place, from all appearances. There was a little dooryard in which had been cultivated the tiniest lawn the boys had ever seen. In the center of this was an old dory with bulging sides. This had been filled with earth and converted into a big flower box and over the gunwale flowers and trailing vines dangled in profusion. The cottage itself was painted white and looked unusually inviting, considering the present weather conditions.

Old Mitchell led the way into his little dwelling and immediately set about preparing a dinner from his well-stocked pantry shelves, while the boys inspected his quarters. There were but two rooms to the cottage, the largest of which was kitchen, dining-room and living-room all in one. But, though the apartment served these many purposes, it was scrupulously clean, and resembled very much Captain Eli's cottage over at the lighthouse.



It was apparent from the first that the place was the dwelling of a seafaring man, for painted yellow canvas covered the floor and marine prints hung about the wall. There was a picture of Farragut's fleet in action, with the intrepid commander clinging to the rigging as he was supposed to have done during most of his battles. Then there was a picture of the burning of the frigate *Golden Horn*, a print of the *Shannon* bringing the *Chesapeake* into Halifax Harbor and a score of other decorations of a similar nature.

But the section of the wall above the chimneypiece was the most interesting to the boys, for over the shining stovepipe hung a great old-fashioned cutlass with its brass hand-guard and its black leather scabbard, and there too was Mitchell's famous old "barker" sticking from its holster. Besides these, a dirk and several vicious-looking knives which the old salt had gathered in the "Inges" were made to serve a decorative purpose.

On the right hand side of the mantelpiece itself was a model of a full-rigged ship bearing in gilt letters the name "*H.M.S. Bulwark*." The tiny little craft looked very majestic with



all her sails set, and the boys were attracted to it immediately. And to balance this on the other side of the mantel was another craft of very strange appearance. In fact, it was of such a peculiar design that Jack was at a loss to know just what to make of it when he saw it. But the moment Ray caught sight of it he gave a loud cry of delight.

"Jack, Jack, look. Jove, there's my model; my lifeboat, all safe and sound. Oh, Mr. Mitchell, where did you get it? By George, can it really be mine? How—where—?"

"'Ere, 'ere, what 'er ye jabberin' habout," exclaimed Mitchell, who was cramming an armful of wood into the stove preparatory to making coffee.

"Why that, that over there—the model—the little boat. Where did you get it? It's mine, mine. I made it. Oh, Mr. Mitchell, how did you ever get hold of it?" cried the delighted youth as he rushed across the room and took the metal boat down from the pedestal Mitchell had made for it.

"That air punkin seed—that air tin kettle o' a wessel; is that what ye're a-meanin'? Why now, blime 'e, ye say hit's yours? Well,



mebby 'tis. Mebby 'tis, seein' as 'ow hit ain't mine 'ceptin' by right o' salvage, which I ain't claimin' hif 'tis yours. 'Ere's a go fer 'e, ain't hit?" said the old fisherman as he scratched his head in perplexity.

"Salvage? Do you mean you picked it up in the water?"

"Right an' so, lad, right an' so. 'Ere I war hout a-tendin' of me traps one day when this 'ere thing comes a-bobbin' an' a skippin' ower t' water, lookin' queerer 'n all git hout. Says I t' myself, says I, 'Ere's a strange craft, Mitchell, what ain't got no owner aboard; why fer don't 'e inwestigate hit.' So I hup an' salwages hit and blime me hif she ain't t' queerest looking wessel as ever I sot heyes on. Says I t' myself, says I, 'Now, hif this ain't t' most pecooler tin punkin seed as ever I clapped heyes hon, I'll eat hit.' An' seein' as 'ow she war s' queer I tikes 'er hinto port an' stows 'er hup longside o' t' hole *Bulwark*, I does."

"Say, but that's funny. Here I've been longing for this all Summer and it's been right on the same island with me," said Ray as he turned the model over and over.

"'Ow's that?" said Mitchell, as he stopped



in the act of putting the dishes on the table and listened.

“Why, you see the Uncle I ran into over at Austin’s Pool a few weeks ago—you know the one who owned the *Fish Hawk* and—”

“T’ feller as was sech a good sailor as we outsailed, ye mean?” asked Mitchell with a grin, taking a big brown pie from the pantry in one corner of the room.

“Yes, he’s t’ one. I told you that he had always treated me mean. Well, you see, he always thought I was lazy and he was bound he’d flog it out of me. He called me lazy because I always wanted to potter around with new ideas and new inventions. He never believed in anything that was progressive. All he knew was hard work, wouldn’t send me to school, wouldn’t help me with anything; just made me work like sin. Treated me downright nasty.

“Keeping me from school was what worried me more than anything else, though. I wanted to go to high school mighty badly because I hoped some day to go to college and study engineering.

“Well, I knew the only way I could ever get



to school was to earn enough money all in a lump to pay my way. About that time the *Titanic* ran into an iceberg up off the banks somewhere; you remember the time, don't you? Well, I got an idea out of that. Why not try to invent an absolutely safe lifeboat that could not sink or capsize? The idea was a corker and I set to work on it. And, by jingoes, when I got my model finished if my uncle didn't get hold of it and throw it overboard and flog me besides. That's what made me run away from him."

"Well, blow me, hif ye didn't make a lifeboat what won't sink ner capsize, fer that air wessel war right side hup and warn't leakin' neither when I got hit," said Mitchell.

"Oh, you don't know how tickled I am. I was sure it would work. I knew I had the right idea," said Ray as he fondled the little craft.

"Right an' so, lad, right an' so; but look 'ere, hif ye stand there ravin' habout yer boat ye won't git anythin' t' eat. Las' call fer dinner, fellers. Hits on t' tible," said the old seaman, drawing up the chairs.



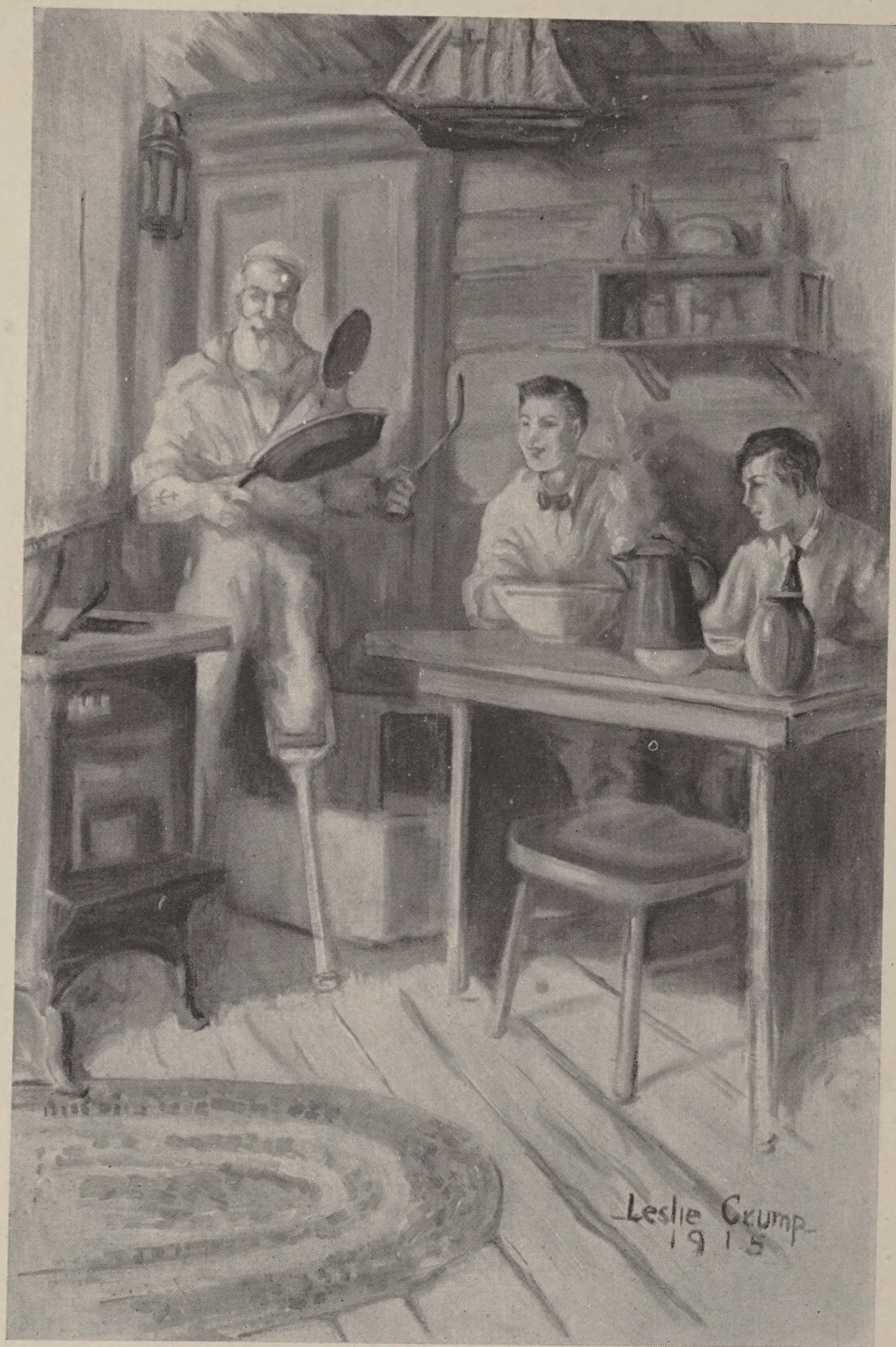
## CHAPTER XII

### THE REEF'S TOLL

**T**HAT dinner was one of the best the lads had ever eaten, it seemed to them. Indeed, Jack forgot about the howling of the wind and the spattering of the rain outside, and Ray even ceased talking of his precious model, so intent were they both on satisfying their ravenous appetites. There were sizzling hot flounders, the finest flapjacks that ever were cooked, cold boiled lobster, fine homemade bread, steaming coffee and a generous apple pie, which Jack assured the lobsterman was quite the best of its kind he had ever tasted.

The old seaman took as much pride in his cooking as any housewife and it pleased him to watch the lads "git a full cargo," as he expressed it. In fact, he urged them to eat more, even after they had announced that they could not possibly hold another morsel, and finally





"The finest flapjacks that ever were cooked."







the boys simply had to push back their chairs and cry "enough."

It was fully half-past three when the dishes were cleared away and washed, and by that time the storm outside had worked up to a furious pitch. The wind whistled about the little cottage and down the chimney, blowing great quantities of smoke into the room from the wood fire that Mitchell kept burning to heat his dish water. The rain was coming down harder now, and spattering against the window panes so furiously that Jack had difficulty in seeing out across the cove in which the *Betsy Anne* and Mitchell's dories were moored.

"Say, Ray, this is a real storm," he said to his young chum. "How on earth are we to get back to the lighthouse? We can't go by way of the *Betsy Anne*. I'd never take a chance in any boat to-day no matter how seaworthy she is."

"Right an' so, right an' so, lad," said the old lobsterman as he took a squint at the weather through the front window. "An' 'e needn't be a fearin' as I'd ask 'e to. Hit ud take a 'ull lot of coaxin' for t' git me t' take t' *Betsy Hanne* hout hin weather like this 'ere even



though she's t' safest boat fer 'er size as ever was. But must 'e go back t'day? Can't 'e stiy 'ere for t' night, mebbby?"

"Goodness, no. You remember how we got a scolding for staying away over night at Austin's Pool, don't you, Ray? Poor Mr. Warner and Big O'Brien were worried to death. Thought we'd been drowned, sure enough. And he saw us go out in a sailboat this morning too. Jiminy, I'll bet they think we were caught in this storm. They will sure decide we are goners, if we don't show up to-night. We must get to the lighthouse, Ray. Don't you agree with me?"

"Yes," said Ray firmly, "Mr. Warner has been mighty good to both of us and I don't think we should cause him any more worry than necessary. I was sorry that we made it so unpleasant by staying at Frenchman's Point last time. We must get back to the lighthouse. We can walk across the island. I don't mind getting wet, do you? That's about the worst that can happen to us."

"Jest so, jest so," said Mitchell with a pleased smile. "I think as 'ow yer two boys 'as got common sense and a bit o' feelin' fer t' other



feller. Glad t' 'ear ye speak es ye do. Go, by hall means, an' hif ye'll take my advice ye'll start mighty soon fer there's no tellin' as t' 'ow long hit'll tike 'e. An' hif ye're hout there when night comes on—well hin t' dark ye might stumble over a cliff peraps er—er—. Say, look 'ere, lads, I'll go along wi' ye. I don't mind gettin' wet an' besides I got 'ilers an' a so'wester. I'll go long wi' ye t' show 'e t' wi, seein' as 'ow ye never walked crost t' hisland yit."

"Great," cried Jack.

"Finest ever," said Ray, and the old seaman looked delighted at their manifestations of pleasure.

"Hall right, me 'arties, we'll start right awiy. You lads, just wait till I git on me ilers an' I'll go out hin t' boat 'ouse an' look hup some old duds as I got stowed awi there agin jist sech an adwersity." And presently the lobsterman donned his oilskins and plunged out into the storm.

A few moments later he stumped into the room again, puffing like a grampus and dripping wet. In his arms he clutched a bundle of weatherworn oilskins.



"Phew, blime 'e hif hit ain't rainin'," said he as he deposited the bundle of clothing on the floor. "'Ere's a lot o' cast-hoffs as I've 'ad a 'angin' hin t' boat 'ouse fer this long time. Some o' 'em is putty much worn, but they'll shed water in spots henywi'. Sort 'em hout, lads."

Jack and Ray began rummaging through the bundle of yellowish gray garments and in no time they were decked out in weatherproof clothes. Of course they wore their regular clothing underneath, as did Old Mitchell, but even at that the lobsterman's cast-offs were far too large for them.

"Some fit," said Jack as he waved a far too long sleeve in the air.

"Huh, two of us could get into this jacket, but just the same I'm glad to have 'em. I'm ready to start—how about you?" said Ray, as he gathered his precious model up under his arms and started for the door. Jack followed him and the lobsterman, after a glance about the cottage and a last poke at the dying fire in the stove, followed the two boys.

The moment they emerged, the lads had to brace themselves to keep from being blown



down. The wind swooped around the corner of the little cottage and tore at their garments madly, while the big raindrops beat into their faces.

"Jiminy, some storm," growled Ray as he forced his so'wester down over his eyes.

"Hit's blowin' some 'at," assured the lobsterman as he pulled his collar up higher and stumped forward in the lead of the little party.

Jack was on the point of making an appropriate remark also, but the wind snatched the words from between his teeth, it seemed, and he decided after that to conserve his energies for the fight against the storm.

Mitchell apparently followed some sort of a path through the forest that clad the top of the island, for he wound his way in and out among the trees in a peculiar manner. But if there was a path, the boys could not detect it. All they did was follow the one-legged old man who silently fought his way against the wind. Although the pine trees were many and their foliage thick, the wind seemed just as strong in the woods as out in the little opening around the lobsterman's cottage. It blew a veritable



hurricane, it seemed to Jack, and the tall trees bent and swayed in a most awe-inspiring manner. In truth, branches were literally torn from some of them and here and there the lads found a big timber that had been uprooted and flung aside by the elements exactly as if it had been no heavier than a clump of bay berry bushes.

On through this wind-lashed forest they plodded, watching constantly to keep out of harm's way for they realized that to be in the path of one of the falling trees would be the end of them. On and on they forced their way, backs bent and faces shielded as much as possible against the stinging rain. Minutes seemed like hours and hours eternal, so slow was their progress. How long they fought the elements the boys could not guess, but gradually as they worked their way across the island a new note was added to the terrible growl of the storm and it gave the lads a better idea of their location. It was the boom of the breakers upon Cobra Reef.

They were nearing the ocean side of the island now. Jack began to detect familiar sections of the woods, in spite of the storm. He



also knew that they were approaching the top of the promontory upon which the lighthouse was located, for they had begun to climb a rather steep slope. On they toiled, their way growing harder as they advanced, until suddenly they were struck by a gust of wind that almost hurled them off their feet. Then Jack knew that they had left the forest and entered the clearing about the construction camp.

Past the blacksmith shop and the bunk-house they trudged, until they came to the long mess-hall. Along the lee wall of this building they made their way until they came to the path that led to the lighthouse. Here they paused and before leaving the shelter of the building, took a survey of the situation.

And as Jack looked toward the beacon he caught sight of a big group of men huddled in the shelter of the pile of granite blocks near the steel tower of the cable-way. There must have been fifty or more in the crowd and all were dressed in oilskins or overcoats.

"Look, there's the whole camp. What's wrong? What's going on out there? Something's happened on the rock, I'll bet. They are looking out to sea!"



"Sure enough. What do you suppose is the matter?" exclaimed Ray, as he too caught sight of the men.

"Matter! matter! Why noo, lad, hit could be somethin's wrong on Cobra 'Ead, but t' my judgment hits like as not a wessel what's comin' ashore, like es 'ow t' schooner *Jessie Joy* did two years back. She came ashore down t' sow'east hend o' t' hisland an' was lifted ower t' reef an' thirty feet hup onto t' rocks an' smashed t' kindlin' afore 'e could say scat. Yes-siree, not a man ner a stick as was saved an'—"

"Jiminy, do you suppose it's a wreck?" shouted Jack. Then pulling his hat down over his eyes he shouted:

"Come on!"

And in a moment all three were fighting their way up the slope toward the men in the lee of the stone pile.

So loud was the roar of the storm and boom of the surf and so intent were the men on whatever they were watching out at sea that none of them heard the three arrive. Indeed, they did not know of the lads' presence until Jack stopped alongside of Mr. Warner, who



was on the outside of the group, and clutched his arm.

"Why, Jack, thank goodness you're here—and here's Ray, too. We thought sure you had been caught in this storm. All safe? Good. And here's Mr. Mitchell again. Brought 'em safely back once more, just as you did from Frenchman's Point. Fine—we were getting worried but—"

"What's going on, anyway? What's the trouble?" interrupted Jack, who had been peering out into the storm.

"What's the matter? Why there's a vessel out there fighting its last fight, I guess, and trying to keep off the reef. Storm's a little too thick now. When it quiets for a few moments you'll be able to see her. Both masts are gone and— There, there! See her! Look quick before the storm shuts in again!"

The lads looked and, sure enough, out beyond the reef they saw the battered hulk of a vessel being tossed about on the big waves like a cork. Only two stumps remained of the masts and the wreckage of sails and spars dragged over the sides and into the sea. The bowsprit had been snapped, too, but on the



stump of what remained was the little pulpit-like affair that characterized the vessel as a swordfisherman.

"Why she's a swordfisherman," exclaimed Jack.

"Right, by George, I hadn't discovered that before, and she looks mighty familiar in—"

"Good lands, it's the *Fish Hawk*," cried Ray in distressed tones. "It's Uncle Vance and his crew. I—I—by hookey, he's in a tight fix, too. I guess it's all up with him now! He'll be on the reef sure! Nothing to give him steerage way! He's helpless!"

"By George, it is your uncle, Ray. And he sure is up against it, too. There's nothing we can do either," said Mr. Warner unhappily. "He's too far out for us to get a line to him. We have the cannon out. It's tucked under the stone pile here. We're trying to keep it dry. Maybe if he comes on to the reef and the ship holds together long enough we can get a breeches-buoy rigged. But it looks to me as if the *Fish Hawk* will go to pieces the moment it hits that line of rocks. Look at those breakers pile up! Did you ever see anything like it? A battleship couldn't stand up under the



pounding those waves would give her. Everything has been washed off Cobra Head except the lighthouse foundation stones. The cableway tower is bent and crippled and all the derricks are gone. So are the tool boxes and all the tools. We're in a bad way out there. It will take us two weeks to recover from this storm."

In truth, the jagged reef with the Cobra's Head at the end was terrible to look upon. Waves thirty feet in height were hurling themselves against the rugged granite boulders, as if seeking to drive the stony barrier deep into the ocean. But the reef resisted the onslaughts and great towers of water shot aloft as the breakers burst with a hiss and a roar against the immovable stone. Jack realized the terrible crushing power behind the tons of water, and he knew that there was little hope of the *Fish Hawk* staying whole once she grounded on the reef.

Close and closer to its terrible fate drove the helpless yawl while the men on the cliff looked on in grim silence. Sometimes the rain came down so hard and fast that the doomed vessel was shut from view. But each time



the storm abated they could see that the sturdy little craft had been driven nearer to the horrible end that awaited it.

Yet with the fight almost lost the swordfishermen had not surrendered. Both Jack and Ray could see a man still clinging to the wheel while several others crawled about the careening decks and sought to build a jury rig on the stump of the foremast. With but a few square feet of canvas to give the vessel steerage way, there was still the barest chance of saving her. But no human beings could hope to work the battered little craft in such an angry sea. Any moment one of the ugly waves that swept the decks might catch them off guard and sweep them over the side like so many match sticks.

Jack, and every other man on the promontory for that matter, stood spellbound. Here before their very eyes were a dozen human beings going to certain death and no power on earth could stop them. It was appalling. Jack shuddered.

"Oh, can't something be done? Can't we get a line to them?" he asked, clutching Mr. Warner's arm.



"I'm afraid not, son," said Mr. Warner, choking with emotion. "It's terrible, but we're powerless. They are too far off. We'll have to wait until they strike and then perhaps we may be able to do something."

"Poor Uncle Vance. I feel mighty sorry for him. And Bannerman too, poor fellow, and Mack and Duncan. Heaven help 'em. It's the end of 'em all," cried Ray as he watched the storm-tossed *Fish Hawk* drive toward her doom.

She was only fifty feet off the reef now—one wave length separated her from eternity. The angry water swirled about her. Great clots of spume were hurled at her by the lashing wind, and white water washed her deck from end to end.

"Oh, it's terrible, terrible!" sobbed Ray. "If we could only help 'em. If—look, look! They'll strike. That big wave was too much for 'em! The next wave will do it! There they go—they're on the reef—no, no, they sheered off—they didn't strike—but—but—Oh! Great goodness, look—look—it's horrible!"

CRASH!



A great wave had seized the helpless vessel, lifted it high aloft and hurled it down across the jagged rocks. The sound of rending timbers could be heard even above the roar of the storm. The *Fish Hawk* had been cut completely in half by the granite ridge and in a fraction of a second the hull of the yawl had been shattered to kindlings. Only a mass of wave-tossed wreckage marked the place where it had foundered.

For a moment the men on the promontory seemed stunned by the hideous sight they had witnessed. Then as they realized that the vessel and the men had been blotted from existence entirely, several of them groaned aloud and turned away. But the next instant they were startled by a cry.

"Look! Look! Jack, O'Brien, look, there's a head, there's a man, two of 'em, three of 'em inside the reef; struggling; swimming. They are trying for the beach. Come on, we'll save 'em. Come!" Ray bounded down the crooked path that led to the narrow strip of beach and Jack and Big O'Brien followed him, with the rest of the men trailing out behind. Even Old Mitchell stumped down the path, although he



could not keep pace with the rest of the party.

Ray reached the sandy strip first and began tugging at one of the two whaleboats which had been tossed high and dry on the beach by the storm. Others rushed to help him, some manning the boat while others tried to launch it. And meanwhile off toward the reef the three men struggled desperately. On they swam, battling with the stubborn, though not so violent, waves inside. Sometimes their heads were above the water and sometimes great curling white caps dashed over them and forced them under, but they were fighting for their lives and they meant to keep afloat until aid arrived.

Slowly but surely the horde of lighthouse builders forced the heavy whaleboat, loaded with the rescue party, toward the water. Inch by inch, foot by foot until at last one of the curling waves reached under its bow and gave them assistance. Another wave and it was launched. Then in a twinkling a dozen oars were shipped and the boat was under way. Ray was in the bow, looking anxiously out toward the struggling swimmers, and Jack was



in the stern beside Big O'Brien, who clutched the tiller.

Under the strokes of the brawny laborers the heavy boat shot forward, bow on, into the angry seas that curled shoreward. But for all the strength behind those hickory timbers and all the sturdiness of the vessel's oaken sides, it was a question whether it could live in even the seas behind the reef. It tossed about like an eggshell and the angry waves clutched at either side and pulled it here and there in spite of the efforts of the rowers.

But slowly they urged her forward toward the swimmers. On and on it forged, each stroke cutting down the distance between the fighting fishermen and their rescuers. They were fifty feet away, now forty, now thirty! Only a little way farther. Only a few strokes more!

"Pull! Pull!" cried Ray from the bow. "Here's one! Pull! It's Duncan, good old Duncan—he's all in! Pull! Whoope-e-e—! Saved!"

Ray reached over the side and seized the all but unconscious man, and with what appeared to be a superhuman effort, hauled him into the



boat and let him fall into a limp, soggy mass in the bottom, just behind the forward oarsman.

“Pull! Pull! Don’t stop—here’s another. It’s Beck—Beck Crawford. We’ve got to save him! He has a wife and some kiddies! Pull! Pull! Here! Some one help me! I can’t lift him! Come quick!”

The forward oarsman dropped his blade and climbing to Ray’s side helped to drag Beck aboard.

“All right! Keep it up! Here’s another! It’s—it’s—oh, it’s Uncle Vance. PULL! PULL! He’s sinking, he’s sink—I’ve got him! Help me here! Heave-o! Good!”

Then as Ray laid the limp form in the bottom of the boat with the others, he said with a peculiar catch in his voice:

“Poor Uncle Vance, he looks like he’s most dead.”



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE NEW FULL-BACK

FOR three days Beck, Duncan and Ray's Uncle Vance were in a precarious state. The men had spent most of their energy in battling for their lives after the wreck of the *Fish Hawk* and it was very fortunate that they possessed the fine strong bodies they did or they would never have rallied at all. In truth, all three were taken from the whaleboat more dead than alive, and when they were carried up to the lighthouse Captain Eli was almost certain that none would live over night.

The three rooms in Captain Eli's cottage were devoted to hospital purposes and Jack and Ray and Mr. Warner shared the bunk-house with the rest of the crew for the time. Old Mitchell, the lobsterman, and Captain Eli took turns as physician and nurse to the unfortunate swordfishermen and worked diligently to restore them to normal health. Daily Jack and



either Mr. Warner or Big O'Brien visited the cottage to learn how the patients fared, and on several occasions they entered the sickrooms and tried to cheer up the men. But Ray, for reasons of his own, would not accompany them.

Indeed, since the day he saved his uncle from drowning Ray had been acting very peculiarly. He seemed undetermined what to do and Jack and Mr. Warner could not help sympathizing with him. Somehow, seeing his uncle close to the point of death, had made the lad forgive him for his past brutality. In truth, his heart had softened to the point where he would have been quite willing to do anything he could for the old swordfisherman. But though his intentions were good, he was quite timid in carrying them out, for, as he explained to Jack, he was not sure how his kinsman would receive him. For that reason he refrained from going near his uncle's bedside or communicating with him in any way. He satisfied himself by visiting the cottage occasionally and inquiring from Mitchell or Captain Eli as to the state of his uncle's health.

The lightkeeper and the fisherman proved efficient physicians, however, for they rallied



the men gradually and by the end of the week had them so that they could hobble downstairs and sit out in front of the cottage in the sunshine. Duncan and Beck seemed to regain their strength faster than Ray's uncle, and in a short time after their first appearance downstairs they were going about the camp as hale and hearty as ever. Vance Carroll, however, did not find his strength as rapidly as the younger men, and for many a day he went hobbling about with the assistance of a cane which Captain Eli loaned him.

As soon as the storm had subsided the camp turned its attention to repairing the damage that the breakers had done out there on Cobra Head. The steel tower of the cableway needed repairing, new derricks had to be erected, new tool boxes constructed, and tremendous quantities of kelp and rockweed cleared away before the men could begin their building where they had left off before the storm. Of course, with these added tasks to be accomplished, Jack and Ray found that their duties increased in proportion. They, too, were very hard at work carrying out little details that Mr. Warner entrusted to them.



By the end of the second week following the storm, however, things were in excellent shape to resume work on the lighthouse structure, and after that there came a brief breathing spell for Mr. Warner and his two young assistants.

This was just what Ray had hoped for. He had been waiting all this time to show Mr. Warner his precious lifeboat model which he had brought through the storm from Mitchell's house that day the *Fish Hawk* struck. Before taking part in the rescue he had shoved the two-foot tin model between the big blocks of granite on the top of the promontory and left it there until he found time to get it out and look it over. A few days after the storm he had brought it to the office shanty, but he had made no effort to show it to the engineer until he was certain that the man had time enough to go into every detail with him.

The first day that the rush of work let up and Ray found Mr. Warner strolling through the camp enjoying his early morning pipe, the boy asked him if he would not spare a few moments in the office with him.

Jack was already there doing some work that



he had left undone the day before, but when Ray brought Mr. Warner in, and a few moments later unearthed the lifeboat model from beneath a dozen rolls of discarded blue prints that had been tossed in one corner of the room, the lad from Drueryville put his work aside and stopped to listen.

Mr. Warner examined the curious little craft from all angles and paid strict attention while Ray explained the details of the idea. And after he had ceased talking the engineer was silent for some time while he scrutinized the metal boat more closely. Then finally he put the model on the table and exclaimed:

“By George, Ray, you’re a clever chap. I believe you have a corking scheme here, too. I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll help you get patents on it and then I’ll see that it gets into the hands of a friend of mine who is in the metallic boat building business. I’ve an idea he might be able to do something with it.”

“Say, will you?” cried Ray enthusiastically, “Great! Perhaps I’ll be able to go to school after all. It—ah—”

“Tut, tut, son. Don’t get too excited about



the prospects. Remember, I didn't say that you would get rich. It may not be a success, or—oh, a dozen things may happen to spoil the possibility of your getting any money out of it. Mighty few inventors ever get rich anyway. It is even possible that you can't get a patent on it, for some one may have thought of the idea long ago. You'll find when you get older that it is not an easy matter to get a device through the patent office. Many a man has spent a fortune and valuable time on an idea only to have it knocked on the head by some little detail.

“There's the man who invented the periscope of the submarine, for instance. He worked out the contrivance and tried to have it patented only to find, after two years of hard work, that the Government would not allow a patent on it because some Frenchman, a long time before, had written a visionary story in which a device, similar to the one he had invented, had been suggested. The Frenchman had never tried to build his instrument, but, nevertheless, the Patent Office in Washington would not allow a patent on the practical ap-



pliance on the ground that it had been exploited before, and the inventor died a poor man, when he should have been wealthy."

"That was hard luck," said Ray; "but anyway, I'm mighty glad to find some one who will take enough interest in my work to try and help me. I have always—"

At this point came a violent thump-thump-thumping in the front room of the office, indicating that some one with a wooden appendage was approaching. All three looked up, expecting Old Mitchell to come through the door. They were not mistaken. The old lobsterman hobbled into the room, a broad grin wrinkling his face. But following immediately behind him was Ray's Uncle Vance!

For a moment every one was silent! The situation was tense, for this was the first time that Ray and his kinsman had come face to face since the day, months before, when Big O'Brien had administered a liberal trouncing to the swordfisherman. Ray turned white and became very nervous, and Jack, for the moment, was breathless. But before either of the lads could speak Vance Carroll strode



across the room and held out a big horny hand toward his nephew.

"Ray," he said in a rough voice, "Mitchell here tells me you saved my life. Thank ye, lad, thank ye. I don't know as it was wo'th savin', but thank ye. Also I want to—ah—er—apologize fer ah—" (the gruff voice faltered for a moment)—"aw, shucks, I guess I wasn't all that an' uncle an' on'y kin should hev been to ye, Ray, and I ax yer parding, Ray."

"Pshaw, don't mention it, Uncle Vance," said Ray, tears starting to his eyes. "I guess I wasn't such a very good boy either. I—"

"Oh, yes, you were. But I didn't realize it until Mitchell here opened my eyes. We got a lot to thank him for, lad. He showed me what kind of a boy you are; he nursed me back on my feet again; and he tells me that he found your lifeboat model, too, which I flung overboard."

"So he did and here it is," said Ray, holding up the metal vessel.

"I'm mighty glad, Ray, fer I repented throwin' t' thing away more than once lately," said the swordfisherman.



This made Ray fairly tremble with happiness, for he had been hoping that his uncle would not catch sight of the model for fear it would bring back his old animosity. But it had quite the opposite effect. Vance Carroll picked the metal boat up and examined it. Then turning to Mr. Warner he demanded:

"What do you think of it, Mr. Engineer?"

"Think? Why I think it's bully," said Mr. Warner.

"And' that's what I been thinkin' too. A lifeboat what won't sink ner turn over could be a mighty handy thing. If we'd had one on board t' *Fish Hawk* instead o' dories, which we was afraid t' trust, we could have left her long before she struck, and perhaps saved all o' t' crew."

"By hookey, that's right," said Ray, whose eyes were sparkling now. Then he added, "This is going to be great, Uncle Vance, and Mr. Warner is going to help me patent it, and perhaps sell it for me so's I can earn money enough to go to school."

"Well, he needn't if he don't want to, fer I'm goin' t' send you to school on my own



money. I've got enough fer that, an' besides I guess I owe it to you."

"What!" exclaimed the incredulous Ray.

"Yes, ye can go t' school's long es ye want. I don't set much store by schoolin' usually, but I've been so blasted mean to ye that I figger I owe ye t' right o' lettin' ye hev yer own way fer a while. Sure, go to school wherever you want an' es long es ye want. I'll foot t' bill. Guess ye earned enough money fer me t' make accounts square in the end."

"Whoop-e-e, hear that, Jack!" cried Ray, scarcely able to control his emotions. "I'm to go to school anywhere I want and—"

"And, of course, you'll come to Drueryville, and be our full-back next year," added the delighted Jack.

"Will I? Well, you bet your boots I will!" shouted Ray, and just because they did not know of a better way to express their pleasure, the two excited lads shook hands again and again.

And while Jack and Ray were talking, Vance Carroll picked up the model lifeboat and, beckoning to Mr. Warner and Old Mitchell, left the room for the outer office. There the three re-



mained for a good two hours, discussing the feasibility of organizing a company to build metal lifeboats, for each one of the three men seemed eager to invest his money in Ray's invention.

THE END

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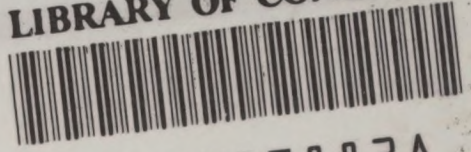








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